

**A Comparative Study of Gender Representations**  
**in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and Its Chinese Translation**

by

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**3rd of 3 modules**

**Modules 1 and 2 are in a separate file**

## **Abstract**

Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* has caused controversy as well as enjoyed great popularity among readers worldwide. Its influence has created a great impact in the field of children's literature. The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. Firstly, the thesis analyzes gender representations in Pullman's trilogy in the context of how he rewrites female archetypes through the subversive re-inscription of Eve, the invention of daemons, the reinvention of 'femme fatale', and the new portrayal of Gypsy women.

Secondly, the thesis aims at comparing and examining how gender representations in the source text are translated, transformed or / and manipulated in its Chinese translation. With reference to Chinese gender ideology, which includes the Chinese concept of the *ying-yang* polarities, Buddhist notions of gender, the notion of the femme fatale, and the stereotypical image of Chinese grannies, the syntactic and semantic alterations made by the Chinese translator are investigated. Issues regarding how Chinese gender views may influence and alter the translation product are discussed in detail.

By studying the similarities and differences in gender representations between the texts, the thesis attempts to shed light on the gender ideology of both English and Chinese contemporary cultures.

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## **DEDICATION**

For my parents and  
in memory of Dr. Murray Knowles

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# CHAPTER ONE

## Introduction

As China modernizes and increasingly opens itself up to outside forces, translation will play a fundamental role in the evolution of culture, and all cultural and social theorists must deal with it, including translation studies scholars.

Gentzler (2008: 122)

### 1.1 The Booming Appetite for Chinese Translations of English Books in China

Due to limited knowledge and misunderstanding of foreign languages, cultures and traditions, Chinese have long used the word ‘*gwai*’, which means ‘ghosts or the mysterious from another world’ in Chinese, to describe distant, unfamiliar lands and peoples in general. Recently, however, Mr Wu Jianmin, the President of China Foreign Affairs University remarked, “China and its external world have never influenced each other so much as today” (*China Daily*, 2005). Indeed, with its rising national strength and booming economic growth, China has gradually started to open up its bamboo gate and communicate with the outside world in a broad manner. In the last forty years, China has actively and extensively developed its foreign relations. Back in 1971, only sixty countries established diplomatic ties with China (*China Daily*, 2005). At present, the

number has almost tripled. As China's diplomacy enters the golden age, more and more Chinese people are exposed to English language, the prominent international language used, learned and shared by the rest of the world. Recent studies indicate that a population of 200 – 350 million in Mainland China (excluding Hong Kong and Macau) has become English-knowing (Yang, 2006). The appetite for English language books is increasing too. According to some Chinese publishers, inspirational business books such as Spencer Johnson's *Who Moved My Cheese* (1999) are popular with Chinese readers (Tryhorn & Wray, 2009). Meanwhile, many English books in China are also used as educational tools to improve English skills. For instance, in 2008, Penguin's best-selling English book in China was *Wolf Totem* (2004). The book was originally written in Chinese by the Chinese writer Lu Jiamin. Because of the popularity and strong sales in the Greater China, Penguin Books paid for the worldwide English rights, translated the Chinese book into English and published the English translated version (2008, translated by Howard Goldblatt) worldwide. This underlines that Chinese readers used the English translated text and the Chinese source text to aid their studies of the English language (ibid).

As Yang (2006) points out, in China, English is mostly learned in the classroom as a foreign language. As a matter of fact, among the 200 – 350 million English users in China, only about 10 million of them manage to reach the standard level of English proficiency, i.e. the ability to read English, understand spoken English and form original English sentences for effective expression and communication. These 10 million English speakers in China make up only 0.77% of the People's Republic of China, the world's

most populous country. As a result, the majority of Chinese readers, who have difficulty reading and understanding English, turn to Chinese translated texts when they are interested in reading books written in English language. As *China Daily* (2006) puts it, “Translated books are flying off the shelves of Chinese bookstores, a sign that is becoming a booming market in the nation”. From 2000 to 2004, 41,000 foreign reading materials of different genres, including contemporary literature, memoirs, social science, etc. were introduced to the Chinese market. The Chinese translated versions of blockbusters from overseas, such as Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code* (2003), Bill Clinton’s *My Life* (2004) and J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series (1997 - 2007), became best-sellers in Mainland China immediately they were published.

## **1.2. A Study of Ideological Alterations in Chinese Translations**

While the market for Chinese translations of English texts is booming in Mainland China, it is surprising that Chinese translators and their works remain unnoticed. As far as I am concerned, it is often the case that when a book is released in China, the author seizes most of the attention. Book critics write about the book; Chinese readers and the public discuss the author and his / her work; literary scholars, lecturers and professors write about it and may even add the author’s work to the reading list of the undergraduate or / and postgraduate courses they teach at universities and tertiary institutes. However, very little attention has been paid to the Chinese translated texts, which the majority of Chinese readers actually read. Take J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* series and their Chinese translations as an example. In 2006, seven million copies of the translated version of

Rowling's *Harry Potter* books were sold in China (*China Daily*). The books were so popular with Chinese children in urban cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai that the term 'Pottermania' was coined to describe the phenomenon. This trend has also attracted the attention of academic scholars. In May 2009, professor Erni and Anthony Fung delivered a paper titled "Class, consumption, and reading formations of Harry Potter in urban China" at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association held in New York. Yet, hardly anyone remembers who the Chinese translator is. Fewer care to read the original work and compare it with the Chinese version.

As Lin (2002) observes, in mainland China, the historical and theoretical study of translation has long been neglected. Often, when Chinese scholars show an interest in Chinese translated texts in their studies, they "give excessive attention to listing facts and probing linguistic matters, to the neglect of the cultural and contextual considerations that have given rise to translation in China in the first place" (Lin, 2002: 170). In other words, if Chinese scholars ever base their research on Chinese translated texts, their focus will be on the translation strategies and skills used by the translators (see Module One for the discussion of this point). Very few will look into the Chinese translated texts "in connection with power and patronage" (Lefereve, 1992: 10). In addition, hardly anyone put emphasis on undermining any "existing ideology" or "existing poetics" (ibid) in the target texts, such as the gender ideology that permeates the Chinese texts. This brings out an interesting question: while the majority of the readers in mainland China are reading the Chinese versions of the English texts, why is the cultural impact brought about by the

Chinese translators left unexplored? Could it be that the Chinese translation is too insignificant to be explored? Or is it overlooked by scholars and critics?

To find out more about the Chinese translators' subjectivity, as well as the cultural impact they may have brought about in the target texts, I chose a passage of about a hundred words from Philip Pullman's *The Subtle Knife* (1997) at random. Then, word by word, I read the chosen passage closely and made a comparison between the source text and the Chinese text translated by Wang Jing (2002). At first glance, it seemed that the translator was quite loyal to the source text. At the level of the plot, all that was conveyed in Pullman's text was carefully translated in the target text. However, when I read the Chinese text again, I found that the Chinese version was in fact filled with conspicuous ideological alterations in its choice of wording.

One interesting example that I found through the comparison was related to the Chinese ideology of 'death', which was reflected in the choice of wording in the target text. In *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Pullman writes, "The air left its lungs with a gurgling sigh and it fell **dead** (my emphasis)." (280). Also, on page 281 of Pullman's book, there is another description about death, "Another cliff-ghast and then a third fell in the stream or on the rocks nearby, **stark dead** (my emphasis)". Intriguingly, instead of translating "dead" as 「死了」, a direct and equivalent expression in the target language, "dead" on page 281 is translated as 「魂歸九天」 (Translated by Wang, 2002). Similarly, "stark dead" (1997: 281) is translated as 「很快見閻王去了。」 (ibid).

When translated back into English, the first expression, 「魂歸九天」 means “the ghost returns to the ninth heaven”. As many Chinese readers may know, this expression is an idiom originated from Taoism. According to Taoist beliefs, each human has three ghosts dwelling in him / her. They are there to keep the wits, sanity and vitality of the person. It is believed that those who are dumb, mentally retarded or have suffered serious brain damage after accidents have lost one or two of their ghosts. The myth is so well-known in Chinese culture that till this day, I still remember how my grandmother would react every time she heard someone sneeze. She would say ‘May God bless you!’ instantly after a person sneezed because she was afraid that one or two of the three ghosts in the person might be ‘sneezed away’. As the Taoist myth goes, when a person dies, the three ghosts inside the person will leave the dead body. The first ghost will return to the ninth heaven; the second ghost goes to the Underworld. The last ghost, on the other hand, stay on Earth in the graveyard. This Taoist myth is so common in Chinese that the expression ‘the ghost returns to the ninth heaven’ is often used as a dead metaphor for ‘dead’ and / or ‘die’. Similarly, the second expression, 「很快見閻王去了」, carries the meaning ‘almost dead’. When translated literally into English, it means “[one] will soon see ‘Yan’, the Lord of the Underworld”. This expression, like the first expression, comes from the same Taoist myth. For Chinese readers, the one who will see ‘Yan’ soon is a dying person, because one of his / her ghosts will soon be sent to the Underworld. What happens next is that ‘Yan’, or the Lord of the Underworld will look at what he / she did during his / her lifetime and judge whether she / he should be awarded or penalized in the



afterlife. Thus, 「很快見閻王去了」 is understood as ‘almost dead’ or ‘will soon be dead’ in the Chinese language.

From this example, we can see that no changes are made to the plot or the characters. However, it is apparent that the Chinese translator has imported Taoist ideology into the target text through his choice of wording. It is hard to tell why the translator uses such Taoist expressions when a more straight-forward and accurate Chinese term can be used. Could it be that the translator would like to make the target text more formal with the Taoist expressions? Or could it be that the Taoist influence is so strong in the Chinese culture that the translator unconsciously borrows those Taoist expressions to describe the notion of death? This example shows the subtle way in which Chinese translations can present alterations of an ideological nature. Be it influenced by linguistic, ideological and / or poetic factors, it is subjected to alterations. In other words, what is being conveyed in the Chinese translation is often a fusion of the author’s work and the translator’s perception of the author’s work. In addition, apart from showing the translation skills used by the Chinese translator, the Chinese translated texts can also reflect the cultural background and ideology of the translator, and even those of his / her readers.

### **1.3. The Submersion of Chinese Gender Ideology in the Target Text**

After conducting the pilot study, I compared Pullman’s source text and Wang’s target text again. Looking at the sea of ideological alterations manifested in the Chinese translation, I found that there was almost always something new and interesting to

discuss when it came to gender representations. Buddhist thinking, Confucian views, concepts of *yin* and *yang*, and sometimes even expressions from Chinese black magic and *kung fu* (Chinese martial art) could be encountered in the Chinese translation. After reading and comparing the English source text with the Chinese target text line by line, I came to the conclusion that the target text is more a piece of rewriting rather than a translation. My question then was: why are Chinese translators so ‘creative’ and unfaithful to the English source text when it comes to the translation of gender?

There are possibly two reasons. One reason is that the English and Chinese cultures are so different that sometimes it is simply impossible for the Chinese translator to get the meaning across. In such an event, the only option for the Chinese translator is to substitute the original idea in the source text with another similar idea which the Chinese readers are already familiar with. In fact, a similar phenomenon occurs in Chinese-English translations as well. As I compared the representations of cross-dressing in the Chinese source text and the English target text in Module Two, part two, I pointed out that because of the linguistic and cultural untranslatability in the two languages, inevitably, Kam Louie, the English translator needs to substitute ideas in the Chinese text with those that most English readers can comprehend.

The other reason for not providing a faithful translation is that for thousands of years, Chinese gender ideology has run deep and got internalized in the core of Chinese culture. It is very difficult to ‘unlearn’ these obstinate Chinese conventions. During the process of translation, the Chinese translator unconsciously added some Chinese gender stereotypes

to the target text. During the reading process, on the other hand, it is unlikely that the Chinese readers would find the translation problematic because they, too, are so used to Chinese gender stereotypes that they would just take them for granted.

The following may give you an idea of how difficult it is to ‘unlearn’ gender stereotypes in Chinese culture. According to the “China Country Gender Review” (Wang, 2002), for the past sixty years, the Chinese government has been trying hard to change some traditional Chinese thinking, such as the gender bias that “investment in girls’ education [is] a waste for the family – since girls will marry and their knowledge will only benefit their husband’s household” (2002). The Chinese government has energetically promoted gender equality and education for all citizens since 1949. A nine-year compulsory education scheme has also been enforced in most of China. However, disappointingly, to this day, high illiteracy rates for women (70% of China’s 240 million illiterates and semi-illiterates are women) and low education levels for girls remain one of the most problematic issues in China. Worse still, according to the results of a survey released on 16 September 2009 by the All-China Women’s Federation, 90% of female college graduates in China reflected that they are subjected to gender discrimination in the job market in China. This underlines the fact that traditional gender views have become part of the Chinese tradition and way of life. Some of them have even become part of the Chinese language. Getting rid of Chinese gender ideology and stereotypes in Chinese translations, simply put, is not an easy task.

Having said so, it is still good news that Chinese readers in general are now getting more and more interested in English books as well as books written in foreign languages. Even though most of them can only read the Chinese versions, and that the Chinese translations are not entirely loyal to the source texts, I believe that Chinese translations are a window for the majority of Chinese readers to learn what is happening in the world outside the mainland.

With the aim of raising gender awareness in both English and Chinese texts, in this Module, I will analyse Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 - 2000), a recent, popular English series that is well-known for its subversiveness. The representations of female characters as well as the subversion of gender stereotypes, if any, will be highlighted and discussed. Then, I will compare the English source text with its Chinese translated text. I will look into how well the original text is preserved in the Chinese translation, in what way(s) and why Chinese ideology alters the representations of female characters. By doing so, I hope that I can bring the hidden but significant Chinese gender ideology and stereotypes into light, so that readers of the Chinese translated text can reflect on what they may have taken for granted, and that they will become more critical during the reading process.

#### **1.4. Focus of the Research**

Philip Pullman's *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000) is an excellent English text to base my research on. It is not only considered prominent among recent children's novels in the

U.K. and the U.S., but also renowned for its irreligious and subversive agenda. Because of the retelling of the Adam and Eve myth, the redefining and celebration of ‘The Fall’, and the negative portrayal of the Church, Pullman’s trilogy has been accused of nurturing an anti-Christian purpose. As Squires (2003) notes, the *Catholic Herald* infamously described *The Amber Spyglass* as “worthy of the bonfire” and “the stuff of nightmares” (18). Peter Hitchens, a rightwing columnist writing in the *Mail on Sunday*, also labeled Pullman “the most dangerous author in Britain” for his condemnation of C.S. Lewis and the Church (ibid).

However, for me, the most intriguing feature of Pullman’s series is its brave reinventions of gender representations. In *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000), conventional gender roles are denaturalized and overthrown. Stereotypical female figures such as Eve, the femme fatale and the sexualized Gypsy female are taken apart from the pretexts, re-inscribed and reassembled to form a fresh and subversive ideological configuration. Furthermore, there is the invention of daemons, the visible and tangible human souls that take on the form of animals and accompany the characters in Lyra’s world. As critics such as Pinsent (2005) and Munt (2008) have noticed, there are two appealing features about the daemon invention: (1) a person’s daemon is almost always of the opposite sex to its human; (2) the appearances of children’s daemons change, while adults’ daemons remain only in one animal form. The re-inscriptions and invention are fascinating in a way that they are not only new to the English readers, but also new to the Chinese readers. Pullman’s rewriting of Eve, the femme fatale and the marginalized Gypsy women, has, in many ways, implicated new possibilities in gender representations. My aim in doing this

investigation is therefore to see how Wang Jing, the Chinese translator handles the source text in the Chinese translation.

There are a number of research questions which I raise in the study. They are:

1. How does Pullman represent and subvert the major female characters in the trilogy?
2. How is Pullman's trilogy translated into Chinese in terms of gender relations?
3. Has gender subversion suggested in Pullman's text become stronger or weaker in the target text?
4. Has Wang Jing, the Chinese translator of Pullman's series, consciously or unconsciously blended Chinese gender views / stereotypes in the translated text?

To answer each of these questions, I divide the Module into two parts. In the first part, I will focus on Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). With reference to the pretexts, the representations of three female characters, i.e. Lyra (the new Eve), Mrs Coulter (the femme fatale), Ma Costa (the Gypsy female), together with Lyra's daemon (Pantalaimon) will be analyzed and discussed.

After the discussion of gender representations in the English source text, in part two, I will move on to the representations of the female characters in the Chinese version. Syntactic and semantic alterations that influence and change the representation of gender in the translation will be discussed. Special attention will be paid to the translation skills,

the choice of diction of the translator, as well as Chinese gender views incorporated in the target text.

### **1.5. Overall Organization of the Thesis**

In Module One, I provided an overview of the most influential translation theories in contemporary translation studies. Then, as an exploratory unit of the research, I looked into various translation techniques commonly employed by Chinese translators. I have used examples from Philip Pullman's *Golden Compass* (1995) and its Chinese translation for exemplification. In accord with the literature review conducted in Module One, in Module Two, part one, I examined a number of popular English children's books, including C.S. Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1955) and Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983), to investigate gender stereotypes and female archetypes commonly found in children's literature. Then, in the second part of that Module, I focused on the notion of cross-dressing and compared its representations in a number of Chinese classic texts and their English translations. Through this comparative study, the difference in gender ideology of the East and the West were highlighted and illustrated.

As a continuation of the comparative study, in chapter two of this present Module, I will begin by identifying five major kinds of female archetypes that constantly appear in the world of English children's literature, namely (1) the young innocent girl (or princess), (2) the evil older woman (or witch), (3) the fairy godmother, (4) the good, ladylike girl in the

private sphere, and (5) the angel of the house. Then, I will examine the different means writers employ to subvert gender stereotypes in recent children's literature in English.

I will also explore the covert sexism encapsulated in the Chinese language. The identification of sexist phenomena in Chinese characters (morphology), vocabulary (occupational terms and forms of address), pronoun system, word order, four-character idioms (Chengyu), proverbs and expressions will shed light on how difficult it is for Chinese translators to translate the subversive notions in the English source texts into the Chinese target texts.

In chapter three, I will show how gender stereotypes are broken and female archetypes re-written, reinterpreted and re-invented in Pullman's trilogy. First of all, the source which Pullman based his series on, i.e. the representation of Eve in Genesis will be examined. A discussion of gender stereotypes or archetypes arising from the Edenic myth will also be discussed. This will then be followed by a brief introduction of Pullman's background and his view of gender. After providing this background, I will discuss the portrayal of Lyra (the new Eve), the creation of daemons (the inner masculine soul image of Lyra), the re-invention of the femme fatale (Mrs Coulter), as well as the alternative representation of Gypsy female (Ma Costa) in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). The Gnostic interpretation of Eve and 'The Fall', Carl Jung's theory of the anima and animus, together with the stereotypical images of the femme fatale and the gypsy female will be revisited in the analysis of the chapter.



Parallel with the analysis in chapter three, chapter four will present a detailed discussion of the manipulations and alterations in the target text of Pullman's work. At the beginning of the chapter, I will introduce the Chinese translator. Then, with reference to Chinese gender ideology, which includes the Chinese concept of the *yin-yang* polarities, Buddhist notions of gender, the notion of the femme fatale, and the stereotypical image of the Chinese grannies, I will examine the syntactic and semantic alterations made by the translator. Issues regarding how Chinese gender views may influence and alter the translation product will be discussed in detail.

In chapter five, the concluding chapter of this Module, I will look again at the major findings and arguments mentioned in chapters three and four. I will conclude by pointing out that certain gender stereotypes are subverted in Pullman's text (the source text). The Chinese translator's perception, judgment and preference in the target text will also be briefly mentioned.

## CHAPTER TWO

### Gender Issues in English Children's Literature and Chinese Translations

The stereotype is the word repeated without any magic, any enthusiasm, as though it were natural, as though by some miracle this recurring word were adequate on each occasion for different reasons, as though to imitate could no longer be sensed as an imitation: an unconstrained word that claims consistency and is unaware of its own insistence.

Roland Barthes (1973: 42)

#### 2.1. Introduction

Prior to the study of gender representations in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000) in chapter three of this module, in this chapter, I will first give a summary of the most common female archetypes and gender stereotyping in popular children's literature in English. Then, I will discuss some subversive devices, or “playful disruptions” (Thacker and Webb, 2002: 148) that children's writers have used to question and subvert the existing stereotypes and ideology in Western culture. After looking at gender stereotypes and subversion in children's literature in English, I will move on and discuss the sexism encapsulated in the Chinese language. The identification of sexist phenomena in Chinese characters (morphology), vocabulary (occupational terms and

forms of address), pronoun system, word order, four-character idioms (Chengyu), proverbs and expressions will shed light on how difficult it is for Chinese translators to translate subversive gender notions in the English source texts into the Chinese target texts. This will provide a background for chapter four, in which alterations in the gender representations in the Chinese translated text of Pullman's trilogy will be examined.

## **2.2. Identification of Female Archetypes in Popular Children's Literature**

Kramarae and Spender (2000) explain that 'female archetypes' are "recurrent clusters of images and patterns of behaviour associated with certain dominant types of the feminine" (85). As in the case of gender stereotypes, they are not falsified facts but representations of one's living experience with females, which is influenced by one's environment and culture. To illustrate this idea, Kramarae and Spender (2000) provide a comprehensive list of important female archetypes from both the realms of literature and religion. They are,

Mother, daughter, amazon, witch, wife, virgin, siren, spiritual partner, sister, hetira, and wise woman. In religion, such figures as Lilith, Eve, Kali, Kwan-Yin, the Virgin Mary, and Sophia personify archetypal images of feminine potency (85).

Based on two of the most conventional and powerful sources for gender role stereotyping in English children's literature – the fairytale and the children's fiction popular with children in the Victorian Age, in the following, I will discuss some of the most iconic female archetypes in the genre of children's literature in order to see how women are represented in the texts that most children read. They are (1) the innocent, beautiful

maiden / princess; (2) the scheming and jealous old witch / woman, and (3) the fairy godmother in the fairytale, as well as (4) the good, ladylike girl in the private sphere, and (5) the angel of the house, i.e. the good wife and mother at home in Victorian children's fiction.

### **2.2.1. Female Archetypes in Fairytale**

The fairytale has never been written exclusively for children (Knowles and Malmkjaer, 1996; Shavit, 1999). Yet, till today, it has remained one of the most popular and influential genres in the world of children's books. Zipes (2006) even suggests that it "may be the most important cultural and social event in most children's lives" (1). Among them, there are the works of Perrault, the Brothers Grimm's tales, and the tales written by Hans Andersen. Some critics consider the fairytale genre as the vehicle for gender stereotyping and socializing in society (Zipes, 1987). However, Bottigheimer (2004) points out that gender roles and sexual relations were not portrayed in the fairytale collections before 1500,

Historians have detected a sea of change in attitudes towards sex and sexuality before and after 1500 (Briggs 277-338), and gender roles in tale collections both reflect and incorporate that change (39).

It was not until approximately 1700 that an entire set of female gender roles was determined. From 1700 onwards, as scholars report, an "insistence on maintaining conservative stereotypes of women" (Levorato, 2003: 6) can be found in fairy tales. Because of gender stereotyping and the limited social options, females are not left with

much room for self expression and development. This is then reflected in the female archetypes that occur in fairy tales. Warner (1995) classifies female characters in fairy tales into several different groups, such as absent mothers, wicked stepmothers, demon lovers, reluctant brides, runaway girls, etc. Many feminists and scholars find that fairy tales put female characters into two categories,

...fairytales ...tend to stereotype female characters, so that most of them are presented as either the beautiful but helpless young girl who needs to be delivered by the handsome prince, or the evil stepmother who is seeking her downfall (Pinsent, 1997: 79).

In this section, I will first examine the two main archetypal representations of women which have been widely discussed by scholars. Next, I will also look at the relatively less common stereotypical female characters which do not fit into the first two archetypes, i.e. the fairy godmother in the fairytale. Then in 2.2.2., I will examine two more female archetypes in Victorian children's books.

The first type is the typically idealized female protagonists. They are the sweet, innocent, helpless, passive and delicate beauties waiting to be rescued, protected and loved by men. "Snow White", the princess who is driven away from home, "Sleeping Beauty", the princess who is bewitched by a vengeful witch, and "Cinderella", the young and beautiful girl who is mistreated by her evil stepmother and ugly stepsisters (Ralph, 1989), are all typical examples of this kind of female archetype. Jones (2002) remarks that these female protagonists largely outnumber male protagonists in fairy tales, dominating both the printed collections and the minds of literate audiences. Yet, the high visibility does not

grant them superiority over their male counterparts. On the contrary, they are depicted as inferior to the seemingly civilized and rational male protagonists, who learn, work and fight in order to protect and rescue themselves and others from danger and adversities. The problem with the portrayal of these princesses and pretty maidens, as Jones (2002) recounts, is that they tend to associate weakness, submissiveness and primitive emotions with females,

...the treatment of fairy tale heroines might be regarded as unequal compared to fairy tale heroes. The female protagonists are...relegated to passive roles, relying on others to provide guidance, motivation, and solutions to their problems. In many of the fairy tales, they are discouraged from speaking their minds or acting on their own initiatives...they are associated with nature and primitive emotions and values... (65)

The stereotypical representation of the 'weak, delicate girl' convinces and brainwashes readers, especially children readers that women are to be subordinate to men. It also implies that there is no need for a woman to fight for what she wants. As long as the pretty girl remains virtuous and patient, she will be rescued in the nick of time and rewarded with the happy ending of getting to marry the handsome, powerful and wealthy prince charming.

The second type of female archetype that often occurs in fairy tales is the female antagonist, usually a woman who is older and seemingly more powerful than the girlish protagonist at the beginning of the story. As a symbol of negative female power, this female archetype may appear in the form of a jealous queen, a wicked witch, a ruthless

stepmother, a tyrannical mother-in-law, and in some stories, a horrible ogress, but she almost always possesses the same set of personality – ambitious, scheming, unfaithful, uncontrollable, heartless, jealous, vengeful, snobbish, vainglorious. Simply put, her unlikable personality makes her everything that the young, innocent female protagonist is not. Another interesting feature about the cruel female antagonist is that she is almost always portrayed as a rival of the protagonist(s). It is not surprising to see the hostility, antagonism and grudges they hold against the younger generations,

All these older malevolent women stand in some degree of parental or guardian relation to the young on whom they prey and whose romances they attempt to spoil (Warner, 1995: 233).

For instance, in Brothers Grimm's *Hansel and Gretel*, the cruel stepmother persuades her husband to leave his own young son and daughter alone in the forest. Later on in the story, the poor children are in great danger because the freaky old woman of the candy house wants to cook and eat them. Also, in Brothers Grimm's *Rapunzel*, the pitiless old woman locks Rapunzel in the tower and furiously interferes with the love between the maiden and the prince. Knowing that the two young people are in love, she hides Rapunzel away from the prince. In despair, the prince leaps down from the tower. His eyes are pierced by the thorns under the tower and the poor young man loses his eyesight. Warner (1995) explains that the sadistic behaviour and hatred exhibited by the perverted older woman may arise from her fear of becoming weak and dependent, "she [the cruel old woman in a fairytale] often had to strive to maintain her position and assert her continuing rights to a livelihood in the patrilineal household" (227). If the old woman happens to be a spinster

or widow, her vulnerability becomes even more acute. To suppress her fear of vulnerability and to gain back her power, the desperate old woman preys on the young ones and creates misfortunes for others.

Female antagonists in fairy tales do not necessarily have to be old, ugly, unfeminine, single or widowed. Some of them, like the evil queen in *Snow White*, look beautiful and attractive to men. However, the older female antagonist is still hostile towards the young female protagonist because the young girl nonetheless arouses the fears of ageing and redundancy inside her. The presence of the young female protagonist threatens to replace her, making her insecure in what used to be under her control. In the Brothers Grimm's *Snow White*, the queen becomes yellow and green with envy when the mirror on the wall tells her that she is full fair but Snow White is fairer still. That is why she attempts to get rid of her rival on many occasions by putting the young princess to death: she sends a huntsman to pierce Snow White's heart, she laces the young girl and takes her breath away, she combs the girl's hair with a poisoned comb, and as we all know, she chokes Snow White with the poisoned apple.

Ironically, as the story develops, readers will find out that it is usually the older malignant woman herself instead of the female protagonist who will be got rid of. Towards the end of the tale, the antagonistic female archetype who is in competition with the protagonist(s) is often removed, punished or killed. As Nikolajeva observes (2007), "At the end of the tale, the antagonist is sometimes punished by death, often of an extremely violent torture" (258). For instance, at the end of the tale, the jealous queen in *Snow White* is forced to



dance on a pair of red hot iron shoes until she falls down and dies in the dancehall. Another example is that in Grimm's *Cinderella*, the nasty elder stepsisters are suddenly attacked by pigeons, which peck out their eyeballs when they are on the way to attend Cinderella's wedding to the prince. Also, in the Brothers Grimm's *Fundevogel*, Sanna, the old woman who plans to cook the children with boiling water, is drawn into the pond by a duck that seizes her head in its beak. She is drowned before she can do harm to the children.

The negative representation of the evil female antagonist has two functions. First and foremost, they are a warning for readers, especially young girls, that no matter how desperate the situation is, it is advisable that women should stay in the domestic sphere, keep silent, obedient and remain subservient to men. It is their responsibility to place the needs of their husbands and the household in the top priority even though they have to endure the hardships in their lives. A woman should not trespass on the men's domain either because compared to men, she lacks self-discipline and is too weak to resist the temptations of evil. Ambitious women who have the desire for power will face humiliation, painful lessons and severe punishment because they are incompetent to take control of a position of power and influence. The second sexist message conveyed in the biased representation of this type of female archetype is that youth and beauty are the most valuable female assets. Nothing else, including assertiveness and intelligence (as manifested by the 'bad' women), is to be treasured. The main goal as well as the ultimate achievement of a 'good, clever' woman is to make sure that she can attract the attention and gain the affection of wealthy, powerful men.

Apart from the archetypes of young innocent girls and evil older women, there is also a third type of female character who is neither a helpless young girl nor an evil old dame. They are the fairy godmothers. Although they do not appear in every story, in popular fairy tales such as Perrault's *Cinderella*, and *Sleeping Beauty* and Madame d'Aulnoy's *The Blue Bird*, the fairy godmother is the merciful female figure who acts as a mentor and offers help to the young female protagonist. While scholars such as Pinsent (2001) associate the fairy godmother archetype with "the feminine side of deity, relating to archetypes of wisdom" (24), others suggest that the fairy godmother may well be the ghost of the mother of the orphaned protagonist. Indeed, when the story of *Cinderella* first appeared in Grimm's *Aschenputtel* in 1812, it is the dead mother who returns in the form of a wishing tree, providing Cinderella with the golden prom dress and the silken slippers for the ball. The dead mother then takes the less gruesome form of a fairy godmother in later versions like Disney's, which we are more familiar with today. Whether the dead mother returns for her daughter or not, the question is, why does the good mother often die at the beginning of the story, while there are so many cruel older women in fairytales? Interestingly, good older women do not seem to exist in the world of the heroines. In fairy tales, good older women occur only in the realm of fantasy through dreams, magic or the supernatural. On this, Bettelheim (1978 / 1991) uses the Freudian approach to explain the phenomenon,

...the typical fairytale splitting of the mother into a good (usually dead) mother and an evil stepmother serves the child well. It is not only a means of preserving an internal all-good mother when the real mother is not all-good, but it also permits anger at this bad 'stepmother' without endangering the goodwill of the true mother who is viewed as a different person (69).

Reading it from another angle, however, the very limited portrayal of good older women shows the biased bigotry at work: young women are good, quiet and obedient, whereas older women are nasty, aggressive, selfish and troublesome. In fairytales, being a 'good' woman means keeping quiet, meek and passive. While young girls may possess some of these 'good' qualities, mature women may know better how to protect themselves and fight for their rights, especially in unfavourable situations. It is only natural that as a human being, one is and will always be concerned about one's own rights and welfare. If older women who have speech power are viewed as evil, and their assertion and rights are considered wrong, then certainly, there will be a lack of 'good' older women. The idea of 'good' older woman is so unrealistic that it can only occur in fantasy, namely, in the form of fairy godmothers.

Besides fairy tales, female archetypes exist in other children's books too. They are particularly apparent in texts used for social engineering, i.e. educating children about 'proper' gender roles and responsibilities for the good of all. Although readers today are more aware of gender issues, books with gender stereotyping are still read by children worldwide. A sizeable number of these children's books were written during the nineteenth century, an era when the rise of children's literature began.

In the next section, I will therefore discuss other female archetypes that occur in didactic children's books, in particular those published in the Victorian age.

### 2.2.2. Female Archetypes in Victorian Children's Books

Living on a combination of Puritan morality and economic aspirations, it was a common practice for Victorian middle-class families to conform to traditional gender roles. The public sphere and the private sphere were clearly divided for males and females. As Butts (1995) states:

[T]he father was still very much the head of the family, the role of the mother essentially supervisory, and the average family's four or five children were brought up on rigid gender-based lines, with the boys expected to follow their fathers into the world of business, and the daughters to become ladylike in preparation for marriage. (78)

Mirroring the social values of Victorian times, many children's books written during that period were also gender-specific and didactic in nature. Texts for children are often filled with "messages about the nature of manliness and womanliness" and "appropriate gender roles" (Tucker, 1999: 77) where children are written into accepted gender stereotypes. As Tucker points out, Victorian children's books can by and large be divided as 'stories for boys' and 'stories for girls':

The strategy of two magazines published by the Religious Tract Society, the *Boy's Own Paper* (founded 1879) and the *Girl's Own Paper* (founded 1880), mirrored that of Victorian children's literature overall (1999: 77).

Book titles such as *I Will be a Lady: A Book for Girls* and *Get Money: A Book for Boys* (Flanders, 2004) can be found in the children's fiction of the period. While stories for boys were set around themes of adventure, war, crime and journeys, stories for girls were

almost always rooted in a domestic setting. Even when girls and women gradually began to seek education and more independence at that time, the binary division of gender roles is still quite obvious. Traditional feminine values are extolled in much popular children's fiction. For instance, L.T. Meade, one of the most prolific girls' writers in late Victorian times, wrote girls' boarding school stories which are essentially about friendships and loyalty; jealousy and misunderstandings, but rarely about games and sport. According to Briggs and Butts (1995):

L.T. Meade's girls are still essentially being prepared for the traditional roles of wives and mothers, and rarely question Victorian attitudes towards gender. (159)

In these popular books for girls, the portrayal of female characters' coming of age is often the main theme, and the setting is often in all-female worlds. The depiction of such, as Pinsent notes, "naturally conforms to the expectations about womanhood of their period" (1997: 51). Dixon (1978) also comments that almost all these girls' books have a prominent girl character who is made to conform in the course of the story. Simply put, the Victorian good girl archetype is polite, modest, neat, ladylike and suitable to become a good wife and mother in future. Good girls are portrayed as those who love to stay in the safe, female sphere "isolated and protected from the competitive male world outside" (Bixler, 1991: 210).

Besides the good girl archetype, there is also the ideal woman archetype in Victorian children's fiction. In novels such as Charlotte Yonge's *The Daisy Chain* (1856), the good wife and mother is usually the angel of the house. She is the angel who willingly serves

her husband and children, takes up the domestic duties, and provides her family with love, warmth and comfort without condition. Comparing the ideal female archetype in Victorian children's fiction with the helpless young girl archetype in the fairytale, the former seems more intelligent and resourceful. However, her talents, aspirations and agency are still limited to the domestic sphere. She is confined by male-dominated scenarios and moulded to meet male expectations. In addition, as Talairach-Vielmas (2007) suggests, "The Victorian cult of the angel-woman conceived ideal femininity as comprising qualities above all of lightness, but also of passivity and even saintliness" (9). The Victorian ideal female archetype is therefore not only virtuous and strictly-disciplined, but also repressed and sterile.

By contrast, women who do not fit in the good girl archetype or the angel of the house archetype fall into the notorious outrageous, uncontrollable and vulgar female archetype. 'Bad' women such as prostitutes, adulteresses, mad women, female criminals, etc. can be classified into this archetype. However, in Victorian children's fiction, the evil female character(s) is usually represented in the form of a monstrous feminine or / and a femme fatale. These archetypes have long occurred in mythology and legends. A detailed discussion of the monstrous feminine and the femme fatale in Greek mythology, the Hebrew Bible, Chinese legends, as well as more recent children's fiction such as C. S. Lewis's *Magician's Nephew* (1950), *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1955) and Roald Dahl's *The Witches* (1983), etc was presented in module two and it will be further extended in chapter four of this module.

### 2.3. Subversions of Gender Stereotypes in Children's Literature

From the various female archetypes I have discussed, we can see that children's literature is often used as a vehicle to support "the dominant, bourgeois status quo" (Mickenberg, 2006: 7), to reaffirm "the existing social order" (ibid), "[reify] traditional gender roles, and [to assume] a white, middle-class norm" (ibid). However, literary scholars such as Alison Lurie (1990) point out that there is also a long tradition of subversive works of children's literature, which "appeal to the imaginative, questioning, rebellious child in all of us, renew our instinctive energy, and act as a force for change" (xi). Her view is supported by Thacker and Webb (2002), who recognize the revolutionary force in children's literature too:

Subversive invitations to 'play' within the text are more frequently seen in children's fiction than in the literature produced for an adult market. While adult literature may deal with social fractures and the interplay of race, class and gender through realism and sensationalism, some of the most challenging children's books make their meaning through playful disruptions of the real (148).

Such subversive, "playful disruptions" (Thacker and Webb, 2002: 148) may take place in the genre of children's literature through different means. The commonest ones include (1) the use of the child as a perspective relativizer, (2) the use of the carnivalesque, and (3) the use of rereading and retelling. In the following sections, I will discuss each of these commonly employed methods with examples from classic children's texts as well as some contemporary young adult children's fiction.

### 2.3.1. The Use of the Child as a Perspective Relativizer

As Jacqueline Rose points out, children's fiction is bound to "set up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader, product, receiver)" (1993: 1 – 2). Unless the author is a child, it is impossible for children's fiction to present children's experiences that are not influenced by adults' values. Nonetheless, the author can try putting himself / herself in the child's place, adopting the child's perspective, and expressing the child's feelings and perceptions with as little distortion as possible. This kind of child-oriented literature has developed since the early modern social era (Hunt and Bannister Ray, 2004). As Hoyrup (2004: 89) says:

...the childhood perspective is employed as a narrative (or heuristic) position enabling its author to question adult reality...The childish eye [is] seen as innocent of convention, and a certain clairvoyance [is] ascribed to the child (93).

In other words, such anti-authoritarian children's literature not only liberates the text from adult norms and social conventions, but also questions the dominating power structures which are taken for granted in society. There are a number of children's book writers who celebrate disrespect for adult authority by using the child as a perspective relativizer in the narrative. One of the best examples is Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). Looking through the eyes of a child, the world is turned topsy-turvy in the Alice books. There is no sense of moral, direction or progress in the story. Adults and authoritative figures are grotesquely distorted and ridiculed. From the psychopathic Queen of Hearts to the bullying Humpty Dumpty, none can manage



anything properly. "[T]heir absurdity removes their authority" (Manlove, 1999: 171). In the end, the only reliable character who remains rational and sensible is Alice, the child narrator.

A similar approach can also be found in the fairy tales written by Hans Christian Andersen. For example, in "The Emperor's New Clothes", none of the grown-ups, including the "honest old minister" (1835 / 1994: 66), the "harmless officials" (67), "the gentlemen-in-waiting...who...carry the train" (70), "all the people in the street and at the windows" (ibid), not to mention the emperor himself, are honest and brave enough to admit that they cannot see the outfit made by the charlatans. What makes it worse is that in order to show others that they are not "unfit for [their] post" (65) or "inadmissibly stupid" (ibid), all grown-ups tell lies. From mouth to mouth, they repeat the nonsense, "It's magnifique! Exquisite! Excellent!" (68) "Heavens, how wonderful the emperor's new clothes are! What a lovely train he has on the robe! What a marvelous fit!" (71) Among the crowd, only a little child dares to speak the truth and laughs at the absurdity and hypocrisy of the emperor and the grown-ups surrounding him, "But he doesn't have anything on!" (71). As in Lewis Carroll's Alice Books, the innocent child in Andersen's tale is used as a perspective relativizer to reveal the stupidity, dishonesty, cowardice and absurdity in adult culture. To conclude, telling the story through the mind and eyes of the child / teen narrator, children's writers such as Lewis Carroll and Hans Andersen ridicule the norms of the adults, unsettle the dominating patriarchal structure and subvert existing stereotypes.

### 2.3.2. The Use of the Carnavalesque

Subversion in children's literature may also take place in the form of the carnivalesque. Carnavalesque, a term coined by Bakhtin (1941), refers to a literary mode that subverts laws and inverts the hierarchical order through humour and chaos. It "serves to stand a preexisting world on its head, to invert or deviate the order, and profoundly to transform its basic ways of thinking" (O'Neal, 1996: 148). As Stephens (1992) explains, carnivalesque occurs in children's books too. It often:

"mock[s] and challenge[s] authoritative figures and structures of the adult world – parents, teachers, political and religious institutions – and some of the (often traditionally male) values of society such as independence, individuality, and the activities of striving, aggression, and conquest" (1992: 122).

Simply put, the characters are allowed opportunities to misbehave, have fun, disrupt social conventions and challenge adult authority. Although at the end, the characters usually have to return to social normality, the "'time out' from habitual constraints of society" (Stephens, 1992: 2) gives the child reader temporary permitted space for nonsense, irrationality, pleasure and laughter. Most important of all, through the carnivalesque, the child reader can experience "the freedom of the imagination to escape rule-boundedness (of nature or nurture) and to think the unthinkable" (McKenzie, 2005: 85). For instance, in Dawn McMillan's award-winning picture book *Doggy doo on my shoe* (2004), hilarity and anarchic pleasure are created as the queen is portrayed as a fool. In the story, the queen eats a lot of beans and she passes wind. From the illustration, we can see the queen dressed elegantly. A brown gas comes out of her bottom, representing

wind. Two dogs beside the queen stick out their tongues and faint because of the connoted smell. Yet the queen puts on an innocent face and pretends that she has not done it. She shouts, "Oh! But I haven't. It's true! It's simply *not* what queens do!" At the background of the illustration, we can also see an official who has a peg clipping his nostrils, frowning. This use of the carnivalesque draws attention to the grotesqueness of the body. The decorum associated with royalty and aristocracy is inverted. The queen's pretension parodies hierarchies, adding more fun and humour to the story.

In addition to Stephens's notion of the carnivalesque, Thacker and Webb (2002) also refer to carnivalesque as "the lure of the feminine narratives and the possibility of engaging with fiction in an open and writerly way" (149), which can be expressed through the "[f]luidity and indeterminacy of meaning, lack of closure and play with language" (ibid). One typical example that makes good use of the uncertainty in discourse to embrace unconscious imagination and symbolic resonance is George MacDonald's *The Princess and the Goblin* (1872) and *The Princess and Curdie* (1883). In the Princess Books, reason, rationality, and the opportunistic nature of the male are depicted as blindness, an exclusive dependence on sight, and limitations of the male protagonist. To seek salvation, Curdie, the male protagonist must transgress the line of demarcation and learn the mystic power of imagination from the female spirit. For instance, instead of using masculine arms and armour such as guns, swords, knives, explosives, helmets and shields, Curdie has to defend himself from the attack of the vicious goblins by singing and rhyming verses of nonsense. As Zipes (2006) observes, MacDonald's books indicates a resistance to the "standard notions of sexuality and sex

roles" (109) and "the restrictions placed on the imagination of children" (ibid). As a consequence, the "intense discontent with domination and the dominant discourse" (ibid) propels him to invert and subvert the world in his tales through the innovative use in discourse.

### **2.3.3. The Use of Retelling**

Apart from the use of the child as a perspective relativizer and the use of the carnivalesque, the use of retelling can also suggest new ways of seeing and thinking to readers. According to Doderer (2004), every presentation is an alteration of the original because each "recipient will accept the forms, contents, and messages of the text in his or her own way" (183). Indeed, spontaneous or organized, it is unavoidable that rereading and retelling can be potentially subversive. As Kroeber (1992) argues,

Even a true believer in an official dogma cannot help articulating a received truth in his own fashion – for stories are told by individuals, not groups. Inherent to all such individuation is the potentiality for subversion, especially because a story is 'received' by individuals, no matter how large and homogeneous the audience of a telling, each of whom simply by interpreting for himself or herself may introduce 'unauthorized' understanding – all the more dangerous if unintended (4).

The degree of subversiveness in retellings differs. At one end of the continuum, there are retellings which are not subversive. These retellings aim at providing simple retellings (i.e. the abridged version) of high culture texts so that the classics of children's and adult literature can become more accessible to younger readers (Stephens and McCallum,

1998). At the other end of the continuum, on the other hand, the retellings can be politicized. Self-consciously, they aim at calling into question the cultural values in the canonical literary pre-texts (ibid). Ideological variations are introduced into the retellings through manipulations in narratives, the register, the content (the plot), as well as the illustrations.

To demonstrate their point, Stephen and McCallum (1998) look into several retellings for children of the story of the Fall in Genesis of the Holy Bible. They find that there can be three categories of biblical retellings – (1) traditional religious retellings and reversions, (2) literary retellings and reversions, and (3) secular humanist retellings and reversions. Compared to the other two categories, the first category of retellings, such as that of Kyles (1953), Beers (1991 / 1995) and Lindvall (1995), is the least subversive. Biblical quotations are often used and there is a tendency to assert “metanarratives developed historically within education systems and a hegemonic social class” (Stephen and McCallum, 1998: 10). In light of this, Biblical ideology together with the teaching of filial obedience is perpetuated. The second category, on the other hand, remains close to the basic story structure but allows more varied discourses, like the variation in narrative tone and technique, an increase in the semantic range of the text, and more play with language. Finally, the third category of retellings is intertextual, self-consciously playful and subversive. Instead of just retelling the story, it alters the basic story structure of the pretexts. For instance, a subversive retelling under the third category will invert and rewrite the story sequence of interdiction, temptation, transgression, consequence of transgression and punishment in the Fall myth, undermining the conventional

interpretation of the pretexts. This third category of retellings is therefore called reinterpretations and / or reversions. Considering recent children's fiction, Philip Pullman's *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000) can well be classified in the third category of retellings. In chapter three, I will discuss and illustrate with examples how Pullman puts forward subversions of gender stereotypes in *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000), a retelling of the Fall myth.

Having discussed the most common female archetypes in popular children's literature in English, as well as the subversive devices that children's writers use to question and subvert the existing stereotypes and ideology in Western culture, in the next section, I will examine the sexism that is subtly embedded in the morphology, syntax and lexical items of the Chinese language. This will serve as an introduction to chapter four, in which the syntactic and semantic manipulations and alterations in the Chinese target text of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000) will be discussed.

#### **2.4. Identification of Sexism in the Chinese Language**

As in other cultures, the Chinese language is the living evidence of the long history of Chinese culture. Looking into language usage, there are many hidden and explicit linguistic patterns that are pervaded with sexist assumptions and notions. In the following sections, I will examine (1) the morphology of Chinese characters, (2) Chinese vocabulary (occupational terms and forms of address), (3) the Chinese pronoun system, (4) Chinese word order, (5) Chinese four-character idioms and (6) Chinese proverbs in

order to shed light on the sexist linguistic patterns that even Chinese users and translators that are aware of sexism in language cannot avoid.

#### 2.4.1. Sexism in the Morphology of Chinese Characters

Unlike English and many other languages, there are no letters or spellings in the Chinese language. Chinese words, or more specifically, Chinese characters are made of one or several radicals. The radicals are section headers and semantic roots that give meaning to the Chinese characters. For instance, characters with the female radical *nu* 女 are almost always related to females. The Chinese characters below are good examples: *ma* 媽 (mother), *jie* 姐 (elder sister), *mei* 妹 (younger sister), *yi* 姨 (aunt), *qi* 妻 (wife), *qie* 妾 (concubine), *xi* 媳 (daughter-in-law), *fu* 婦 (married woman), *po* 婆 (old woman). Moreover, Chinese characters that are perceived to evoke female imagery also consist of the female radical. *Jiao* 嬌 (pampered), *nen* 嫩 (delicate), *yuan* 婉 (congenial, restrained) and *zhuang* 妝 (adorn oneself, dress up) are all words that describe or / and are associated with feminine traits, even though they can also be used to describe males, children and the elderly. Among the many Chinese characters with the female radical, those that are found most problematic are the ones with vulgar and negative connotations. Here are a number of the most frequently used Chinese characters with negative meanings: *ji* 嫉 (jealous), *du* 妒 (envy), *lan* 婪 (greedy), *wang* 妄 (presumptuous), *luan* 變 (homosexual

and paedophilic), *xian* 嫌 (dislike, scornful), *jian* 奸 (wicked, evil, treacherous), *jian* 姦 (rape, illicit sexual relations), *yao* 妖 (demon) and *nu* 奴 (slave). Note that all the negative Chinese characters with the female radical *nu* 女 in fact have no fundamental connections with the female gender. As shown in the following sentence:

Chinese version	:	這	男人	貪婪	又	奸險。
			(Zhe	nanren	tanlan	you jianxian)
Word-to-word translation:		This	man	greedy	and	wicked.
English translation	:	This man is greedy and wicked.				

The expression 'This man is greedy and wicked' has nothing to do with the female gender. However, the female radical embedded in the derogatory Chinese characters *lan* '婪' (greedy) and *jian* '奸' (wicked) creates false impressions, unwittingly implying disrespect towards women.

#### 2.4.2. Sexism in Chinese Vocabulary

Besides the discriminatory Chinese character structure, Chinese vocabulary is also found to be gender-biased and misleading. First of all, most powerful professions are thought to be male occupations in the Chinese tradition. Women who enter these masculine professions are therefore often marked with the prefix *nu* 女, which means 'female' or



'woman'. For example, *fa guan* 法官 (judge) becomes *nu fa guan* 女法官 (female judge); *yi sheng* 醫生 (doctor) becomes *nu yi sheng* 女醫生 (female doctor); *jiao shou* 教授 (professor) becomes *nu jiao shou* 女教授 (female professor) (Lu, 2009). Also, in Chinese, the equivalent term for 'career woman' is *nu qian ren* 女強人, which means 'female strong person'. The implication is that all *qian ren* 強人 (strong person) are supposed to be male, and women should only stay home. As Moser (1997) points out, "The case of a female "strong person" is an exceptional case, a curious footnote in the male-dominated discourse" (15). Thus, there is a need to specify the gender in the term.

On the other hand, occupations that are lower paid and generally seen as less prestigious are considered as feminine, in the sense that when a man is engaged in such occupations, the use of the prefix *nan* 男 (male or man) is required, such as *nan hu shi* 男護士 (male nurse), *nan bao mu* 男保姆 (male nanny) and *nan mi shu* 男秘書 (male secretary). Both the prefix *nu* 女 (female) added to the masculine professions and the prefix *nan* 男 (male) added to the feminine occupations perpetuate the notion that women are inferior and second class.

In addition to the sexist occupational terms, the forms of address in Chinese are also unfair to women. Like English, males, married and unmarried, are called *xian sheng* 先生 (Sir or Mr). However, the marital status of females is indicated in the standard terms *xiao jie* 小姐 (Miss) and *tai tai* 太太 (Mrs). Also, in ancient Chinese texts and traditional

history books, women's names are seldom mentioned because they are considered insignificant. Often, a Chinese woman is only addressed with her father's surname (when she is single) or her husband's surname (when married), such as *Zhang shi* 張氏 (English translation: A person whose surname is Zhang) and *Lin shi* 林氏 (English translation: A person whose surname is Lin). As a result, many women remain nameless in Chinese history. Today, the situation has improved, but still, only the husband's name will be mentioned when the husband and the wife are being addressed together. That is, if the husband's name is *Lin Dai Ming* 林大明, the couple will be addressed as *Lin Dai Ming fu* 林大明夫婦 (Mr and Mrs Lin Dai Ming) or the more formal *Lin Dai Ming kang li* 林大明伉儷 (Mr Lin Dai Ming and wife). Intriguingly, a woman who has great academic achievement is also called *xian sheng* 先生 (Sir or Mr). As Moser (1997) explains:

The term *xiansheng* 先生, in addition to functioning as a standard term of address for males ("Sir, Mr."), has also traditionally been used in academia as a polite form of address for a teacher who has achieved a great degree of respect and achievement (and such teachers were usually male, of course!)...women professors to this day are often respectfully addressed in this way in book inscriptions or letters. *Xiansheng* as a term of address...has...shown herself to be able to compete on equal footing with *men*" (14).

To sum up, the Chinese forms of address convey the sexist message that women are of little significance so their names need not be mentioned. Also, the Chinese language bears the covert bias that women do not deserve "a fully independent and normative semantic status in the linguistic domain" (Moser, 1997: 14), because most powerful professions belong to males. The 'small' number of exceptional cases, or so the Chinese

believe, can be referred to by adding the prefix *nu* 女 (female) to the normative male occupational terms.

### 2.4.3. Sexism in the Chinese Pronoun System

Before the May 4<sup>th</sup> Movement of 1919, the third-person pronoun in the Chinese language was, surprisingly, non-gender specific in terms of its morphology and syntax. The third-person pronoun is *ta* 他, which is composed of the radical *ren* 人, meaning 'human' and 'humanity'. The plural form of the third-person pronoun, *ta men* 他們 (they), was also non-gender specific at the syntactic level. Although both *ta* 他 and *ta men* 他們 (they) seem all-inclusive, they are not truly gender neutral. Farris (1988) notices that *ta* 他, *ta men* 他們 (they) and the Chinese radical *ren* 人 (human, humanity) often have strong male defaults. Nonetheless, for thousands of years, Chinese users used the all-inclusive pronoun system to refer to all, males and female, children and adults. However, in the early twentieth century, young Chinese intellectuals were very influenced by Western literatures. Chinese language reformers such as *Hu Shi* then devised four more written forms for the third-person singular pronoun *ta* 他 since 4<sup>th</sup> May 1919 (Jung-Palandri, 1991). Now, there are altogether five third-person singular pronouns in Chinese:

- 他 : Equivalent to 'he', refers to males only
- 她 : Equivalent to 'she', refers to females only
- 牠 : Similar to 'it', gender-neutral, refers to an animal or a plant only

- 祂 : Similar to 'it', gender-neutral, refers to a celestial / divine being only
- 它 : Similar to 'it', gender-neutral, refers to inanimate object only

As I pointed out above, the originally all-inclusive third-person singular pronoun *ta* 他 with the radical *ren* 人 (human, humanity) is now reserved exclusively for 'he' or 'him'. For the pronoun 'she' and 'her', a new Chinese character *ta* 她 was invented. The radical *ren* 人 (human, humanity) was replaced by the radical *nu* 女 (female, woman). Besides the masculine and feminine third-person singular pronouns, there are also singular pronouns specifically designed for animals and plants, gods and divine beings, and inanimate objects. For non-human creatures such as animals and plants, the radical *ren* 人 (human, humanity) was replaced by the radical *niu* 牛 (cow) to form the new pronoun *ta* 牠 (similar to the gender-neutral pronoun 'it' in English but referring to an animal or a plant only); for gods and divine beings, the radical *shi* 示 (the spiritual) is used to form the new pronoun *ta* 祂 (similar to the gender-neutral pronoun 'it' in English but refers to a god or a divine being only). For non-living objects, the non-gender specific Chinese character *ta* 它 (similar to the gender-neutral pronoun 'it' in English but refers to a lifeless object only) is now used.

Although the Chinese pronoun system was reformed, the problem of grammatical gender has now been introduced to the Chinese writing system. As in most European languages, the masculine third-person singular pronoun *ta* 他 ('he' or 'him') is used in generic

contexts. The default image is of a male unless the context demands a female. Consequently, women become subordinate and invisible.

#### 2.4.4. Sexism in Chinese Word Order

In the Chinese language, masculine terms almost always have the 'natural' order of coming before feminine terms. Here are a number of examples that show the conventional male-female word order in Chinese: *nan nu* 男女 (male-female; man-woman), *fu mu* 父母 (father-mother), *ba ma* 爸媽 (dad-mom), *fu fu* 夫婦 (husband-wife), *fu qi* 夫妻 (husband-wife), *zi nu* 子女 (son-daughter), *er nu* 兒女 (son-daughter), *xiong di jie mei* 兄弟姐妹 (elder brother, younger brother - elder sister, younger sister), *qian kun* 乾坤 (heaven-earth, which symbolize male and female respectively) and *long feng* 龍鳳 (dragon-phoenix, which symbolize male and female respectively). The problem of this male-female word ordering pattern is that in most oppositional and collocational dyads, the first component of the dyad is usually perceived as generic, normative, positive and primary, whereas the second component of the dyad is characterized as adjunct, negated, less typical and of less importance (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). In Chinese, almost all oppositional pairs follow this ordering logic, e.g. *shi fei* 是非 (right-wrong), *dui cuo* 對錯 (correct-incorrect), *rong ru* 榮辱 (glory-shame), *ai hen* 愛恨 (love-hate), *shang xia* 上下 (up-down) and *gao di* 高低 (high-low). Thus, the 'male' first, 'female' second word order pattern in Chinese language inevitably reflects the deep-seated gender bias in the Chinese culture.

#### 2.4.5. Sexism in Chinese Four-character Idioms

Many Chinese four-character idioms originate from traditional folktales and the preaching in Chinese classics such as *The Analects of Confucius* (ca. 500 B.C.). They are often used by Chinese intellectuals and teachers in formal contexts, oral and written. School students are also required to learn these four-character idioms in their Chinese lessons and use them in their compositions. I can still remember how I was encouraged to memorize these Chinese idioms when I was a primary student.

Unfortunately, many of these four-character idioms carry negative connotations and demeaning ideas about women. The use of these derogatory terms reiterates and passes on the sexist notions and social conventions from generation to generation in Chinese society. The following notorious examples will reflect the gender prejudice embedded in the Chinese language: In *hong yan huo shui* 紅顏禍水, it warns men that beauties (*hong yan* 紅顏) are all as dangerous as floods (*huo shui* 禍水), because they are the cause of trouble and will bring disasters. In *fu ren zhi ren* 婦人之仁, it refers to the silliness of women showing sympathy to enemies, which later on brings harm to oneself. The interesting thing about this idiom is that it can refer to the silliness of both men and women. *Fu you chang she* 婦有長舌 remarks that all women have a long tongue, meaning that all women like to argue, gossip, and they do not know when to shut up. In *po fu e zhi* 潑婦惡治, *po fu* 潑婦 refers to the nasty woman. All together, the four characters mean that it is not an easy task to tame the shrew. Similarly, the idiom *po fu*

*ma jie* 潑婦罵街 evokes the imagery that the shrew is yelling or scolding others so loudly that everyone in the street can hear. It is a derogatory expression to describe women who speak up in public.

#### 2.4.6. Sexism in Chinese Proverbs and Expressions

Besides the four-character Chinese idioms, there are also numerous Chinese proverbs and expressions that show strong bias against women. One good example is *zui du fu ren xin* 最毒婦人心 (A woman's heart is the most poisonous.). Ironically, as Chinese history reveals, most massacres, genocides and unjustifiable wars in China were caused by tyrannies and warlords, who were all males; rather than being 'poisonous', women and children were most often defenseless victims of male brutality and violence. Another proverb that discriminates against woman is *san ge nu ren yi ge xu* 三個女人一個墟 (Three women make a market.). The proverb gives the negative impression that all women like to gather up and gossip. Women are portrayed to be noisy, nosy and obnoxious.

There are also proverbs that teach women how to play the role of a 'good' daughter, wife and mother. *Nu zi wu cai bian shi de* 女子無才便是德 (It's a virtue if a woman hasn't talent.), a proverb from *The Analects of Confucius* (ca. 500 B.C.), is one that reveals gender inequality in the Chinese tradition. Such a proverb is based on a myth, that it is bad luck for a woman to have talents because her talents will bring trouble and create

threats to her man and family. Because of this proverb, many girls and women are deprived of their right of receiving education. Contradictorily, women are expected to be talented enough to bring up good sons. In *ci mu duo bai er* 慈母多敗兒 (A gentle, lenient mother brings up useless sons.), the gentle mother is relegated and blamed for effeminating her son, making him useless.

As Chinese expressions that describe men and women are compared and contrasted, sexist attitudes become apparent. While a Chinese woman who has many lovers is negatively described as *fang dang yin jian* 放蕩淫賤 (loose, promiscuous, cheap, easily seduced and bedded), *shui xing yang hua* 水性楊花 (A woman of easy virtue), and *ren jin ke fu* 人盡可夫 (Any person can be the husband of and sleep with a disgraceful, adulterous woman), a Chinese man who has many lovers are praised as *feng liu ti tong* 風流倜儻 (handsome, amorous, unrestrained and unconventional in spirit and behaviour). To conclude, sexist attitudes and social inequality are directly reflected in the proverbs and common expressions of Chinese language. Sexist features encapsulated in Chinese morphology, grammatical patterns and lexical expressions make it extremely difficult for Chinese users and translators to remain gender neutral.

## 2.5. Summary

In this chapter, I have approached the issue of gender stereotypes in children's literature in English. Firstly, I examined the fairytale and books popular with children and



discussed the most significant female archetypes that occur in these genre of children's literature, namely (1) the innocent, beautiful maiden / princess, (2) the scheming and jealous old witch / woman, (3) the fairy godmother in the fairytale, (4) the good, ladylike girl in the private sphere, and (5) the angel of the house, i.e. the good wife and mother at home.

Then, using examples from classic children's texts as well as a more recent children's picture books, I discussed the ways in which gender subversion takes place in children's literature through (1) the use of the child as a perspective relativizer, (2) the use of the carnivalesque, and (3) the use of retelling.

In section 2.4, I gave an overview of the sexist phenomenon manifested in the morphology, syntax and lexical expressions of the Chinese language. With examples, I showed that it is not easy for Chinese translators to translate the subversive notions in gender representations of the English source texts. This is because gender inequality is encapsulated in the Chinese language. Unless a drastic linguistic reform is brought on, it is impossible to eliminate sexist features in Chinese language usage. Because of the linguistic constraints, untranslatability is unavoidable therefore. Gender subversions coded implicitly in the English grammar and / or lexicon may be unbridgeable in the Chinese source texts.

In the following chapter, I will move on and investigate how Pullman subversively retells the Fall myth and reinvents female archetypes in *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000).

## CHAPTER THREE

### Representations of Gender in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials*

Everything we read...constructs us, makes us who we are, by presenting our image of ourselves as girls and women, as boys and men.

Mem Fox (1993: 506)

#### 3.1. Introduction

A re-version, as Stephens and McCallum explain, is “a narrative which has taken apart its pre-texts and reassembled them as a version which is a new textual and ideological configuration” (1998: 2). Pullman's *His Dark materials* (1995 – 2000), in this light, is well-qualified to be a re-version. With the objective to look into how Pullman's re-version reinvents female archetypes in the pretexts and imposes a new ideological configuration, I will focus on, in this chapter, Pullman's re-inscriptions of a number of stereotypical female characters: (1) Eve; (2) the femme fatale, and (3) the marginalized Gypsy women.

Firstly, I will examine the creation story of Genesis of the Holy Bible and discuss Eve's sexist portrayal. Then, I will compare the traditional representation of Eve with the new and perfected Eve in Pullman's trilogy. The subversive representation of Lyra and her daemon (or Lyra's soul) will be discussed and analyzed too.

Secondly, I will revisit the femme fatale archetype in mainstream culture in the West. To draw a contrast, I will then examine the character of Mrs Coulter in Pullman's *His Dark Materials* and see how Pullman reinvents the femme fatale figure in the trilogy. Lastly, I will compare the Gypsy female stereotype with Pullman's representation of Ma Costa, the Gypsy female in the trilogy. Through examining the re-inscription of Eve, the invention of daemons, the re-invention of the femme fatale, and the new portrayal of the gypsy female in Pullman's re-version, the subversion in the representations of female characters will come to light.

In the next part, I will first give a brief introduction of Philip Pullman's personal background and his view on gender.

### **3.2. Philip Pullman's Personal Background**

Pullman is a best-selling and world-famous English author who has written books of different genres, including fantasy, science fiction, gothic horror stories, graphic novels, plays, fairy tales, mythic tales, Victorian melodrama and contemporary novels (Parker, 2006: 4). Popular among readers of all ages and both sexes, many of Pullman's books

have now been translated into different languages and appreciated by millions of people of different countries. While Pullman is named “the most dangerous author in Britain” (Peter Hitchens, *Mail on Sunday*, 27 Jan 2002), he is also considered to be “the male J.K. Rowling” who is “constantly compared with J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis” and “[l]ikened to literary lions such as Milton, Tolstoy, Blake, even Chekhov” (Steve Meacham, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 Dec 2003).

Pullman has published many best-selling children's novels and picture books, such as *Spring-Heeled Jack* (1989), *The Tiger in the Well* (1990), *The Wonderful Story of Aladdin* (1993), *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* (1995), *Clockwork* (1996), and *I Was a Rat!* (1999). Besides children's books, Pullman has also written play adaptations of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Arthur Conan Doyle's *Sherlock Holmes* for the Polka Theatre in Wimbledon, London. He has also published contemporary novels like *The Broken Bridge* (1990) and *The Butterfly Tattoo* (1992). Among the many books written by Pullman, *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* (1995) won him a Gold Medal at the Smarties Book Awards in 1996. In 1997, *Clockwork* (1996) also successfully won a Silver Medal at the Smarties Book Awards and was short-listed for the Carnegie Medal and the Whitbread Children's Book Award. However, the work that gained Pullman most fame and attention is the *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000) trilogy. *Northern Lights* (1995), the first book of the series, was awarded the Guardian Children's Fiction Award and the Carnegie Medal. It was also named the Children's Book of the Year at the British Book Awards in 1996. Then, *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), the last volume of the series, was awarded the Guardian's fiction prize in 2000 (Chabon, 2005: 11). In 2001, it became the

first children's book to be awarded the Whitbread Book of the Year. In 2003, the series took the third place in the BBC's Big Read Poll. While *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2003) won countless prestigious book awards, Pullman was also crowned with numerous prizes for his devotion and achievement in writing. He was awarded the Eleanor Farjeon Award in 2002, the Queen's CBE in 2004, and in 2005, the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award, the world's largest award for writers of books for young people. Apart from the awards, *His Dark Materials* is also famous for its subversive retelling of Biblical texts and reinvention of gender roles.

At present, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2003) has been translated into 39 languages and published all over the world. The series has sold more than seven million copies in Britain and the United States (Lyall, *The New York Times*, 25 Jan 2004) and over 14 million copies on the international market (Reinert, 2007). It has also been adapted for radio, audiotape and other genres. In Dec 2003, the trilogy was adapted into a three-hour play by Nicholas Wright. The play was directed by Nicholas Hytler and performed at the National Theatre in London. The tickets were sold out before the first preview. The playwright, Tom Stoppard, also worked on the film versions of the trilogy. In Dec 2007, *The Golden Compass*, a US\$ 180 million movie based on *Northern Lights* (1995), was released by the New Line Cinema. The box-office hit US\$ 372 million internationally and episode two of the series is predicted to be coming soon.

Huge numbers of children have read *His Dark Materials* over the years. For feminists, one of the main concerns is: what is Pullman's attitude towards gender, sex roles and stereotypes? His view of gender, as reflected in his writing, creates effects on children. The most direct way of studying Pullman's attitude towards gender, sex roles and stereotypes is therefore to look into the representations of female characters.

In sections 3.3 – 3.6, I will give a detailed account of how Pullman makes use of retelling to put forward subversions of gender stereotypes. This will then, in turn, provide an interesting starting point for the comparative study in chapter four, in which the Chinese translator's perception and interpretation of such gender subversions will be examined and discussed.

Yet, before I move on to section 3.3 and look into the portrayals of female characters in the hugely popular trilogy, I will first discuss briefly Pullman's view of gender as revealed in interviews and mentioned by critics. This might shed some light on why and how the female protagonist and other female characters are represented in certain ways in *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000).

### **3.3. Pullman's View of Gender**

Pullman rarely talks about his view of gender directly in public, but many have observed that he often tends to have girls as protagonists and / or heroines in his work. As Parker remarks, "Philip is good at dreaming up courageous girls, such as Sally Lockhart and

Lyra Belacqua" (2006: 20). In addition, since Pullman lost his father at the age of seven, like him, the female protagonists are usually without one or both of their parents. For example, in *The Ruby in the Smoke* (1985), Sally Lockhart is an orphan. In *The Firework-Maker's Daughter* (1995), Lila lost her mother when she was a child. Also, in *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is brought up as an orphan in Oxford. When asked whether he is more drawn to female characters, Pullman does not answer the question directly. He only replies in the interview that he seldom writes about the characters with any particular purpose. He reveals that he likes to write in the third person, and that he does not have the habit of impersonating the main character. In fact, he would not even base his characters on people he knows. Rather, he finds himself more attracted to "unwritten-about-yet female characters floating about in the air", and so many of his books have females as the main characters.

To me, the most intriguing aspect of Pullman's work is the unconventional, anti-authoritative spirit of his stories. Through the introduction of transgressive female characters, some gender stereotypes suggested by texts like the Holy Bible are questioned and inverted. When the interviewer, Susan Roberts wondered whether Pullman was trying to express his view of thinking through the invention of subversive female characters such as Mary Malone, an ex-nun in *The Amber Synglass* (2000), Pullman said that characters in a book cannot be considered as a reflection of his own view:

Well, Mary is a character in a book. Mary's not me. It's a story, not a treatise, not a sermon or a work of philosophy. I'm telling a story, I'm showing various characters whom I've invented saying things and doing

things and acting out beliefs which they have, and not necessarily which I have" (2002).

Nonetheless, what Pullman cannot deny is that his representations of women in the trilogy will affect readers and evoke different responses from them, just as the way C.S. Lewis's female characters have affected Pullman. According to Ezard (*The Guardian*, 2002), in the Q&A session of a 65-minute lecture in the Guardian Hay festival, Pullman scathingly criticized the way C.S. Lewis treats Susan, one of the female characters in the Narnia series. C.S. Lewis's Susan is, like Pullman's Mary Malone, only "a character in a book". The story of Narnia "is not a treatise, not a sermon or a work of philosophy". However, the exclusion of Susan from the salvation in the end of *The Last Battle* irritates Pullman. Pullman, who has twelve years of experience teaching teenage girls at three colleges in Oxford, describes the poor treatment and negative portrayal of Susan as "detestable",

It is monumentally disparaging of girls and women. It is blatantly racist. One girl was sent to hell because she was getting interested in clothes and boys (Ezard, *The Guardian*, 3 Jun 2002).

Pullman explains that the cruel punishment promised by C.S. Lewis reflects his "very weird unconscious feeling about sexuality". According to Pullman, puberty is not a shame and should not be viewed as 'The Fall'. It is a valuable and important stage where natural changes take place in one's body, intellect and emotions. For him, C.S. Lewis could have been more considerate to the coming of age of the teenage girl,

...in one's adolescence...one begins to be interested in poetry and art and science and all these other things. With consciousness comes self-consciousness, comes shame, comes embarrassment, comes all these



things, which are very difficult to deal with (Pullman, recorded in *The Daily Telegraph*, 17 Mar 2004).

Instead of loathing or suppressing signs of puberty, Pullman suggests that we can look at them positively and welcome the passage from childhood to adulthood. The coming of age, the awakening of sexuality and growing up, in Pullman's eyes, should be celebrated. This is also one of the themes that Pullman deals with in *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). In section 3.2, I will discuss this issue in more detail, when introducing 'The Fall' and Lyra, the new Eve.

Besides showing particular sympathy to female characters in their teens, inspired by feminists, Pullman also sees the concept of 'gender' and that of 'sex' separately and differently. In an interview with *teenreads.com* (11 Dec 2001), the interviewer, Jennifer Abbotts, asks Pullman why the daemons in *His Dark Materials* are usually the opposite gender to that of their human counterparts. Pullman corrects her by saying that daemons are the opposite 'sex', not 'gender', for 'gender' is "a grammatical term". He then continues to explain, "we each have a bit of the opposite in our make-up, and it [the invention of daemons as the opposite sex] was one way of making that visible". Pullman does not elaborate on his view of sex and gender in the interview. Nonetheless, the subtle implication occurs – although anatomy (or sex), as Sigmund Freud said, is a destiny, the character and personality of a person usually reflects a combination of both masculinity and femininity. It is, as contemporary gender studies have advocated, "independent of biological sex" (Denny and Green, 1996: 86). One's biological sex does not necessarily determine automatically one's inherent character. Men may show 'feminine' qualities

such as tenderness, gentleness, intuitiveness, passivity and submissiveness, just as women may carry 'masculine' qualities like forcefulness, assertiveness, competitiveness, etc.

In the trilogy, Pullman tells the readers that children's daemons are gendered but changeable in form and shape. Daemons only become fixed during adolescence. For instance, Lyra's daemon, i.e. Pantalaimon (Pan) is often called a 'he', but under Pullman's description, Pan demonstrates both masculine and feminine traits randomly. Pullman also changes Pan's forms and roles constantly and rapidly. When I first read the series, I felt that the multiple, fluid appearances and personalities of daemons were hard to follow. If Pullman had not described Pan as a 'he', I would not have recognized Lyra's daemon as male. This imaginative creation is yet another hint which shows that Pullman shares similar views with those of gender critics, that gender is socially constructed. At the beginning, a newborn child is a tabula rasa without any inborn dispositions. It is through education, training and imitation that children learn and perform gender-related behaviours (Brannon, 1996). As they grow up, "they learn their parts and give a satisfactory performance" (Disinberre, 1975 / 1996: 243).

Having discussed Pullman's background, his work and his view on gender, in the next part, I will move on to investigate the representations of different female characters in *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). To start with, I will look into the portrayal of Lyra Belacqua, the twelve-year-old female protagonist in the series.

### **3.4. The Representation of Lyra, or the Subversive Re-inscription of Eve**

One of the crucial themes of Pullman's *His Dark materials* is that "Lyra is to become the new Eve" (Hodgson, 2005: 151) and then "the saviour of the world" (Gray, 2009: 181). Indeed, from the beginning to the end of the trilogy, the protagonist plays the role of heroine. She goes on an adventurous journey when she rescues her friend Roger from the Gobblers, destroys Bolvangar and save the kidnapped children, helps Iorek Byrnison regain his throne, restores the Dust, and begins to build a 'Republic of Heaven' at the end of the story. However, as Nikolajeva (2003) points out, Pullman's Lyra is not the kind of romantic hero like Harry Potter, who is morally pure and innocent. She is morally flawed, and there is ambiguity in her character. Nikolajeva (2003) explains that the "dubious moral qualities" is due to "the postmodern concept of indeterminacy, of the relativity of good and evil" (136 - 137).

The young protagonist may be undetermined and morally flawed, but my main concerns are: with the manipulation and transformation of the archetype of Eve, has Pullman altered the negative perception of women, as suggested in the Bible and many subsequent Christian representations? While the female protagonist does not have to be perfect, has the retelling of the myth of the Fall successfully introduced any signs of subversion of the traditional gender roles and stereotypes? Or is it just a perpetuation of the conventional gender stereotypes?

With the aim of raising gender awareness, in this part, I will compare the parallel yet drastically different biblical pre-text and re-version. From themes such as Adam and Eve in Eden before the Fall of Man, to what happened in the Fall and the consequences of the Fall, I will discuss how Pullman subverts the Bible and introduce new gender ideologies through Lyra, the new Eve in *His Dark Materials*.

#### **3.4.1. Before the Fall: 'Adam and Eve' Becomes 'Eve and Her Helper'**

As numerous critics and feminists have noticed, the Bible as a text itself, is almost totally patriarchal (Milne, 1997). The Grand Narrative in Genesis introduces a binary opposition of male and female that is overwhelmingly sexist, if not misogynistic. Here, I will present the patriarchal ideology implied in the Eden story. First, at the beginning of the Garden myth, God Yahweh created the whole world for Adam, the man. Woman was created last. As Tribble (1978) notes, first means superior and last means inferior or subordinate. Similar to other gender pairs, such as man and woman, male and female, he and she, boys and girls, husband and wife, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, etc., the ordering of Adam-Eve reflects a sexist basis. It implies that Adam is primary and normative, whereas Eve is adjunct, less important, perhaps deviant. What is more, the woman was created for the sake of the man. The male God made a woman only because Adam could not find a "suitable helper" (Genesis 2:20). She is a helpmate to cure man's loneliness. Such male-centredness becomes more apparent when it is described that Eve, the first woman, was only a derivative made from Adam's rib, whereas Adam was made from the breath of

God. Because of the deficiency, women were also said to be initially flawed in her creation. In *Malleus Maleficarum* (1486), it is said:

It should be noted that there was a defect in the formation of the first woman, since she was formed from a bent rib, that is, a rib of the breast, which is bent as it were in a contrary direction to a man (Cited in Norris, 1998: 327).

Although the book has been disowned by the church, and the claim of the bent rib and the initial flaw is now considered as a heresy, the notion of woman being taken out of the man still deprives women of an autonomous existence (Abraham, 2002). This male-biased view is also in line with Aristotle's infamous view on women. He claimed that women are deformed, incomplete, unfinished men. Seeing Eve as a derivative in his possession, Adam had the power to name her after him, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman'<sup>1</sup>, for she was taken out of man" (Genesis 2:23). Later on, he also named her 'Eve', meaning "the mother of all living" (Genesis 3:20). She was assigned the traditional sex-role by Adam.

In *His Dark Materials*, however, such male-centreness does not occur. As Eve, Lyra is never portrayed as inferior or subordinate. Firstly, instead of being the last to be mentioned, Lyra and her daemon are the first to appear in the first book. Then, as the story develops, it becomes increasingly apparent to the readers that the trilogy is not about Adam, but Lyra the new Eve and her adventurous journey. The whole plot of *Northern Lights* (1995) revolves around Lyra, with her being the most important and

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<sup>1</sup> The derivation occurs in the most common Bible translation in English, including the King James Version. However, the derivation cannot be shown in other languages such as Chinese.

significant protagonist of the series. Through different characters, Pullman highlights the importance of Lyra and her role as Eve. In *Northern Lights* (1995), for instance, Serafina the witch foretells how and why Lyra matters so much to them and their worlds:

There is a curious prophecy about this child: she is destined to bring about the end of destiny. But she must do so without knowing what she is doing, as if it were her nature and not her destiny to do it. If she's told what she must do, it will all fail; death will sweep through all the worlds; it will be the triumph of despair, for ever (1995: 310).

The new Eve and the importance of her free will are addressed as primal concerns. Then, in *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Lena Feldt the witch emphasizes the notion of Lyra-as-Eve again. It is prophesized that Lyra “will be the mother – she will be life – mother – she will disobey” (328). Lyra is named “Eve! Mother of all! Eve, again! Mother Eve!” (ibid).

In the final episode, Fra Pavel emphasizes that Lyra is the new Eve:

The child...is in the position of Eve, the wife of Adam, the mother of us all, and the cause of all sin...if it comes about that the child is tempted, as Eve was, then she is likely to fall (2000: 71).

Eve is described as the sole person who makes the decision and determines the destiny of everybody. Interestingly, while Eve becomes the centre of attention, Adam or the idea of Will as the Father of all is hardly indicated in the books. As the male protagonist, Will only joins Lyra in *The Subtle Knife* (1997) after Lyra has experienced a lot of adventures of her own. Reversing the conventional heroic quest pattern, Will plays the secondary role of being the assistant, bodyguard and companion of Lyra the heroine.

As Lyra's assistant, Will also plays the role of a domestic helper. He does the cooking, cleans the working surfaces in the kitchen, washes the floor, empties the rubbish into the bin, as well as teaches Lyra how to do domestic work and take care of herself. In the second episode, Will makes an omelette for Lyra, who has not had a proper meal for days just because she thinks only "servants do the cooking" (1997: 24). He also shows Lyra how to open the tin with a can-opener. After having supper, he asks Lyra to wash the dishes and tidy up. When Lyra refuses to do so, like a mother, he teaches her that she has the responsibility of taking care of the place,

We've got to eat, so we'll eat what's here, but we'll tidy up afterwards and keep the place clean, because we ought to. You wash these dishes. We've got to treat this place right (28).

Yet, Lyra also has no idea how to do the washing. She does not know that to cleanse the oil off oily cooking utensils, washing-up liquid is needed. She only manages to complete the task by trial and error. Besides domestic chores, Will also teaches Lyra the need to take care of herself. Lyra is so spoiled and indulged that she does not and does not know how to wash her hair. It is done by her housekeeper, and she never needs to, she explains. Seeing that Lyra has not washed herself for days, Will kindly reminds Lyra to take care of her personal hygiene, "...the first thing is you better wash yourself. You need to look clean...go and wash your hair for a start. There's some shampoo in the bathroom" (64). Compared to Lyra, who is incompetent in handling domestic chores, Will is definitely a keener housekeeper and carer. The ideological notion of women being 'the angel of the house' is broken, satirized and inverted. Readers are shown that the domestic sphere, a sphere that is often thought to be "more or less defined by the predominance in it of

biological reproduction and motherhood, of emotional ties and kin relations" (Lechte, 2001: 194), is not necessarily the exclusive province of women. A male, like Will, can be more nurturing than a female. The female has to learn how to take care of the household and the hygiene from the male instead. Likewise, a female, like Lyra, can be more powerful and influential than any male in the public sphere. The association between women and the private, domestic sphere is only a myth.

In brief, Lyra the new Eve in Pullman's re-version turns gender stereotypes of the Biblical text upside down. In Genesis, Eve was the last to be mentioned. Now, in Pullman's trilogy, the new Eve becomes the first to be mentioned. In the pretext, Eve is the derivative, subordinate other who is tied to her natural passions and desires; now, in Pullman's version, she demonstrates that she is a person who strives for reason, justice, autonomy and freedom. Better still, the new Eve is no longer the 'suitable helper of man'. Under Pullman's rewriting, she becomes the most significant protagonist.

In the next section, I will discuss how Pullman's rewriting allows Eve to be transformed from an immoral, faithless ensnarer into a courageous follower of knowledge and truth.

#### **3.4.2. In the Fall: Sin and Shame Glorified**

In the story of the Garden of Eden, Eve is linked to moral weakness (McKenzie, 1954). Both Adam and Eve are well informed of God's command, namely "You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you



will die” (Genesis 3: 3). Yet, the crafty serpent picks the “weaker person” (Foh, 1999: 393). Enticed by the serpent, Eve takes the forbidden fruit, eats it and disobeys God. Afterwards, she “usurp[s] her husband’s place by leading him into sin”. She “entice[s] or seduce[s] Adam into sin” (ibid), causing the wrath of God and finally the Fall of Man. The impact of this negative portrayal of Eve has been so deep and powerful that over the millennia, according to Daly (1973), Eve has been continually considered as the universal woman and as the incarnation of evil. The instructions on worship in 1 Timothy 2: 11 – 14 is a good example that illustrates the blaming of Eve and all women:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner.

Tribble comments that “the Women’s Liberation Movement is hostile to the Bible” and feminists “read to reject” (1999: 431). From a critical perspective, however, the notions of male supremacy and female subordination legitimated before the Fall, as well as the negative portrayal of the female in the Fall, need to be re-read and rewritten. Based on the pre-text, this is what Pullman does when he rewrites the Fall. In *His Dark Materials*, God the creator is not mentioned. Instead, a false, self-proclaimed deity is introduced. The trilogy makes it clear that the false deity did not create the world and everyone. He is only the oldest among all conscious beings. In chapter 2 of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), Balthamos the angel explains:

The Authority, God, the Creator, the Lord, Yahweh, El, Adonai, the King, the Father, the Almighty – those were all names he gave himself. He was never the creator. He was an angel like ourselves...He told those who came after him that he had created them, but it was a lie (33).

Like a dictator, the oldest angel demands that all others worship and obey him as the “Authority”. The Fall, in this light, is interpreted as a chance to overthrow a false deity.

Also, Eve's personal consciousness, free will, desire for knowledge, truth, and justice, as well as her disobedience to her parents and the church are not punished, but celebrated. The readers are invited to witness Lyra's growth and maturation. She continues to grow into a wiser, stronger, and better person. For instance, at the beginning of the first book, *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is simple-minded and she tends to pass judgment on people just by looking at their physical appearances. She regards female Scholars with disdain because they look dull and unattractive. She thinks that those women are “poor things” (67) who “could not be taken more seriously than animals dressed up and acting a play” (ibid). She goes so far as to describe the female Scholars as “dowdy” (71) and “smelt of cabbage and mothballs” (ibid). Contrastively, she looks up to and thinks highly of Mrs Coulter just because the woman looks beautiful and classy. As the trilogy unfolds, however, Lyra learns from her experience, gradually becoming more mature in her reasoning. Shocked by the fact that Mrs Coulter is in charge of the horrible guillotine of children and their daemons, Lyra realizes that Mrs Coulter is a “wicked liar” (285). She reflects on her own superficiality and wonders how she could be so blind as to find “this woman... so fascinating and clever” (286).

Lyra's level of moral reasoning also escalates at dramatic speed as the story develops. According to Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral reasoning development (1981, 1984), normally, a person will go through three different levels of moral reasoning before s/he

becomes fully mature in his / her cognitive moral development. First of all, a person will enter “the preconventional level” (Jarvis et al, 2003: 35). At this level, reasoning is based on the consequences of his / her actions. Like a child, a typical preconventional moral reasoner will only stick to rules to avoid punishment. Although s/he may be aware of other people's interests, his / her primary concern is always his / her personal needs and interests. Then, as the person continues to grow in his / her cognitive moral development, s/he will reach “the conventional level” (ibid). At this level, laws, social norms and the expectation of others are taken into account. To a person at this level, what is ‘good’ and ‘right’ means what pleases and is approved by others, especially authority figures. Finally, at the highest level, i.e. “the postconventional level” (ibid), reasoning is a matter of individual conscience and personal principles, which are not defined by laws or social norms. People operating at this moral level realize that judgments are based on abstract concepts such as justice, equality, human dignity, etc. It is understood that there are universal ethical principles which all societies should agree to. To postconventional moral reasoners, the highest value should be placed on universal ethical principles. Even when they are in conflict with laws or any authoritative figures worshipped by the majority, one should still stick to one's conscience and ethical principles, stand up for the greater good and fight for the welfare of all.

With regard to Kohlberg's ideas of moral reasoning, at the start of the series, Lyra, like all children, only shows the most primitive form of morality,

She is self-centered and egocentric. She does whatever she finds to be fun, and is only obedient so that she can avoid being punished. She is not concerned about how her actions affect others (Dolgin, 2005: 75).

For instance, Lyra plays tricks on some dead scholars by switching around the daemon-coins in the dead scholars' skulls. The daemon-coins "shows its owner's lifetime companion" (1995: 50) and it is improper to disturb the tombs and coffins of the dead just for fun. Pantalaimon, her daemon is upset about her naughty tricks. He becomes so agitated that he flies up and down, utters shrill cries and flaps his wings in her face. Still, Lyra takes no notice. She only restores the daemon-coins to their rightful places and says sorry to the skulls when the angry ghosts of the dead scholars haunt her at night. In brief, this corresponds to Kohlberg's preconventional level (Dolgin, 2005). Interestingly, as Lyra gets over the primitive stage, she apparently skips the next level, i.e. conventional moral reasoning entirely and leaps into the final, highest level, postconventional moral reasoning. The headstrong protagonist does not care about what others think of her. She remains indifferent to others' expectations. Both she and Pan would feel disgusted if she has to pretend to be a "universal pet" that is always polite, "light-hearted and charming" (1995: 88). She does not desire other people's approval for her actions either. Nor is she concerned with following rules. Advice and warning of authoritative figures such as her parents and the church have no effect on her. She only follows the truth, i.e. what she reads from the golden compass. She does what she believes is right even when it is against the grain and would put her life at stake. Simply put, the moral weakness of Eve is replaced by the adolescent maturational change and cognitive moral development of

Lyra. Her constant urge for self-reinvention and improvement has gained her glory, victory, friendship, respect and honour.

The re-version empowers the female protagonist with the strength to resist hierarchical power but it was considered as promoting atheist messages. On 9<sup>th</sup> October, 2007, a U.S. based Catholic league criticized Pullman for his attempt to “denigrate Christianity” and promote “atheism for kids” (*Catholic League*, 2008). They then called for a boycott campaign of the movie version. Similarly, shortly after the release of the movie, an editorial was published on the Vatican newspaper *L'Osservatore Romano*, in which the movie adaptation was denounced as godless and the “most anti-Christmas film possible” (Owen, 16 January 2008, *Times Online*).

Irrespective of whether the books contain elements of anti-Catholicism, most of the critics, although having different positions on the issue, agree that the representation of the new Eve signifies a completely different set of gender ideologies. In the Biblical version, Eve is portrayed as weak in mind, unreliable, untrustworthy, faithless, greedy and insatiable. She eats the forbidden fruit because she is tempted and deceived. At the time when she picks the fruit, she knows very well that she is sinning against God. Still, to obtain knowledge, she “t[akes] some and [eats] it” (Genesis, 3: 6). Yet, in *His Dark Materials*, the story does not start with greed, temptation or deception. At the beginning, Lyra knows nothing about ‘the knowledge of good and evil’, the forbidden fruit, or the Authority’s commandment. She starts her dangerous and toilsome journey to the icy

wasteland only because she vows to rescue her missing best friend Roger as well as other kidnapped children. To save others, Lyra selflessly risks her own life.

In chapter 16 of the *Northern Lights*, Lyra almost has her daemon interceded (cut off) by the silver guillotine when undergoing the mission of saving children from the Gobblers. Similarly, to find Roger and set the dead free, Lyra risks Pan's life, her dearest daemon. In chapter 21 of *The Amber Spyglass*, Lyra needs to go into the land of the dead to find Roger. She is warned that to do so, she will have to separate from her soul, "Your daemon vanishes into the air, and you vanish under the ground" (2000: 282). Nonetheless, Lyra sets her mind to do "what's proper" (281):

...I feel sad and wicked and sorry about my friend Roger...it's a torment and sorrow to me that I never said goodbye to my friend Roger, and I want to say sorry and make it as good as I can...if I have to die to do what's proper, then I will, and be happy while I do. (280 - 281)

To find Roger, Lyra separates from her "heart's companion" (296) and continues her journey to the land of the dead. Pullman describes in detail how Lyra suffers the heart-tearing agony and anguish of leaving Pan,

Will could hardly watch. Lyra was doing the cruelest thing she had ever done, hating herself, hating the deed, suffering for Pan and with Pan and because of Pan, trying to put him down on the cold path, disengaging his cat-claws from her clothes, weeping, weeping. Will closed his ears: the sound was too unhappy to hear. Time after time she pushed her daemon away, and still he cried and tried to cling (298).

Although Pullman once said in an interview with *The Sydney Morning Herald* that his "books are about killing God" (2003), intriguingly, in the scene mentioned above, Lyra,

the new Eve, becomes a Christ-like figure who beautifully reaffirms Christian virtues such as love, courage and self-sacrifice. In favour of truth and rightness, she suffers great pain to bring hope, freedom and happiness to others. Will witnesses the whole ordeal. Unlike Adam in the Biblical text who hides when trouble comes, Will admires Lyra for her courage, stands by her and feels the pain with her, "he admired her honesty and her courage at the same time as he was wretched with the shock of their [Lyra and Pan's] parting" (298).

Apart from manifesting Christ-like virtues, Lyra also subverts the negative perception of Eve as "the first temptress", "a liar in nature" and "responsible for the widespread female tendency to dupe and lie" (Norris: 1998: 327).

In chapter 23 of *The Amber Spyglass*, Lyra saves the ghosts in the land of the dead and makes friends with the harpies by telling the truth. She nourishes them, brings them hope and joy with true stories of her life and true things about the world. It is the truth, but not lies and fantasies that empowers Lyra. When she speaks the truth, the audience listens with passion:

As well as the ghosts, silent all around, and her companions, close and living, there was another audience too; because the branches of the tree were clustered with those dark bird-forms, their women's faces gazing down at her, solemn and spellbound (331).

The harpies stop their mocking and attacks on hearing the truth from Lyra. In exchange for Lyra's story, they "take the travellers and their knife to a part of the land of the dead

where the upper world was close" (334). The bird-forms are also willing to make a treaty with the ghosts – when the ghosts tell them the true stories of the world, the harpies will guide them faithfully "from the landing-place by the lake all the way through the land of the dead to the new opening out into the world" (334).

Deception, temptation and betrayal do not occur at the critical moment of the Fall either. Firstly, Lyra is neither tempted nor deceived. The so-called encounter with the serpent is just a sharing with Mary, who talks about her true feelings of love and how she left the Church. As Mary shares her thoughts, she addresses both Lyra and Will. In other words, Mary, who is supposed to be the serpent in the re-version, treats both protagonists as equal. She does not pick and persuade the one with a 'weaker mind'.

Then, at the moment when Lyra and Will 'taste the forbidden fruit', both of them are described as ignorant of their roles as Eve and Adam. They are not torn between the options of obeying God and obtaining the knowledge of good and evil, as Adam and Eve had in Genesis. The Eden story in Pullman's text is not about the human misuse of moral freedom and inherited guilt. Instead, it is about coming of age and the awakening of sexuality. As shown in the excerpt below, the protagonists fall in love and enjoy the moment as all lovers do:

Then Lyra took one of those little red fruits. With a fast-beating heart, she turned to him and said, "Will..."  
And she lifted the fruit gently to his mouth.  
She could see from his eyes that he knew at once what she meant, and that he was too joyful to speak. Her fingers were still at his lips, and he felt them tremble, and he put his own hand up to hold hers there, and then



neither of them could look; they were confused; they were brimming with happiness.  
...their lips touched. Then before they knew how it happened, they were clinging together, blindly pressing their faces towards each other (491-492).

Lyra does not play the role of a deceitful, alluring seductress under the pen of Pullman. There are no tricks, plans or stratagems set beforehand. It just happens that the two teenagers fall in love and experience love for the first time. The love, passion and attraction between the lovers are real, sincere, natural and mutual.

Critics such as Russell (2005) suggest that Pullman's trilogy may have borrowed the notions of Gnostic Christianity, where the serpent in the Genesis is worshipped as the bestower of knowledge, and that Eve's disobedience against God is viewed as an utterly necessary move for gaining wisdom. Indeed, like a rediscovery of the alternative Gnostic Eve, Lyra subverts the binary oppositions in the Bible. She plays the Christ-like role and manifests Christian virtues such as love, self-sacrifice, and devotion to the truth. The negative connotations of Eve in the Fall are also inverted. The Fall has become an allegory of the coming of age, and Lyra's fall is portrayed and celebrated as the key to the awakening of human wisdom. The gender stereotypes in the Biblical pre-text are broken and subverted.

### **3.4.3. Consequence of the Fall: A Return of Life Spirit**

In the Bible, immediately after Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit, “the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized that they were naked” (Genesis 3: 7). They felt so afraid and ashamed that they hid and made coverings for themselves. As a punishment for their disobedience, God cursed Eve and all women, “I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you” (Genesis 3:16). For Adam, God gives him a life sentence at hard labour on the ground, “through painful toil will you eat of it all the days of your life” (Genesis 3:17).

Regarding the double punishment cast on Eve, a French medieval guidebook known as *The Goodman of Paris* (1393) explains that Eve was twice cursed because she sinned twice. Eve's first sin was her pride. She set herself up to be like God. Accordingly, she was cast down into a position of subjection to her husband. Her second sin was the same as Adam's – she ate the forbidden fruit, and thus her second penalty was the terrible pain of childbearing (Cited in Norris, 1998). Though some contemporary scholars explain that in the Hebrew Bible, the Edenic story is not meant to be an explanation for evil (Phipps, 1989), sexist implications remain influential in Christian belief as well as in our mainstream culture. To this day, fundamental Christians still believe that women are the first in the order of sin, women are more sinful, and that they are more susceptible to and responsible for evil, etc.

Picking up this motif, Pullman reconfigures the consequences and implications of the Fall. In *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), sin, guilt and punishment after the Fall are replaced by serenity, universal balance and self-sacrifice. In chapter 35, after Lyra and Will eat the fruit and kiss each other, “around them there was nothing but silence, as if the world were holding its breath” (492). Shortly afterwards, Atal feels the difference in the air. When Mary looks up to the sky with her spyglass, she finds that the Dust-flood has stopped and the Dust-stream is returning:

The terrible flood of Dust in the sky had stopped flowing...it was in perpetual movement, but it wasn't flowing away anymore. In fact, if anything, it was falling like snow-flakes...The Dust pouring out of the stars had found a living home again, and these children-no-longer-children, saturated with love, were the cause of it all (p.496-497).

Because of the Fall, Dust the life spirit returns and nourishes the long-starved Nature. For that, Lyra and Will feel no shame and guilt. Instead, they feel like they are “melting with love” (509). Their time together is saturated with love and sweetness. As Pullman puts it, they looked dazed, as if some happy accident had robbed them of their wits...They talked, they bathed, they ate, they kissed, they lay in a trance of happiness” (ibid). In the re-version, Lyra the new Eve plays the role of the mother of all living not by giving birth, but by re-diverting the flow of life spirit into the universe.

What is remarkable is that Pullman's re-version does not end with a blissful ending. Towards the end of *The Amber Spyglass*, Kirjava and Pan reveal that Dust leaks out into nothingness whenever an opening is made between the worlds. Worse still, every time

they open a window with the knife, a Spectre that feeds on Dust and daemons is made, “It’s like a little bit of the abyss that floats out and enters the world” (515). To restore stability and bring ultimate peace to the worlds, Lyra and Will must close every single opening and destroy the subtle knife. Kirjava suggests that she and Will can leave their world to stay in Lyra’s world forever, or that Lyra and Pan can leave theirs and go to Will’s world. However, this is not a good idea because no one can leave his / her world for more than ten years. A person will “get sick and ill and fade away and then die” (516) when staying in a different world for ten years, like Will’s father. The dilemma gives the protagonists great pain.

He thought she would die of her grief there and then. She flung herself into his arms and sobbed, clinging passionately to his shoulders, pressing her nails into his back and her face into his neck, and all he could hear was, “No-no-no...” (513).

For a moment, Will is tempted by the selfish notion of secretly opening a window between his world and Lyra’s, where “they could go through whenever they chose, and live for a while in each other’s worlds” (521). His idea is rejected immediately by Lyra. In spite of her own suffering, Lyra shakes her head and says “No, we can’t” to Will. She insists and reminds Will that they have to follow what is genuinely right. At the end, Lyra and Will act in favour of ultimate universal balance and the welfare of all. With broken hearts, they close all windows and separate forever. They sacrifice their personal happiness and suffer intolerable loss, rage and despair.

To conclude, Lyra in Pullman's work is the new, perfected Eve. Subversions of traditional gender roles and stereotypes occur before the Fall, in the Fall and after the Fall. Instead of being the subordinate, inferior Other, Lyra is the first autonomous being. She is the most significant protagonist and Will is her caring male helper who is keen on doing domestic chores. More significantly, rather than playing the role of a faithless, untrustworthy seductress, Lyra shows a high level of moral reasoning and self-discipline. For the welfare of all, she refrains Will and herself from the temptation that comes up in Will's mind. Christ-like virtues such as self-sacrifice, devotion to friendship and truth are also her attributes. In the land of the dead, she nourishes the ghosts and the harpies with true stories of her life and true things about the world. In times of danger and need, she selflessly risks her life, sacrifices her dearest daemon and then gives up the chance of staying with Will in order to rescue her friend, liberate the ghosts, and stop Dust from leaking out into emptiness. As the mother of all living, she re-diverts and restores the flow of life spirit in the worlds, bringing hope and energy back to all. Controversial may it be, Pullman's *His Dark Materials* can be read as a feminist rewriting of the story of Genesis.

### **3.5.The Invention of Daemons**

Besides the re-inscription of Eve, Pullman has also introduced the idea of daemons into the trilogy, which, to both academic and non-academic readers, is one of the most fantastic and successful inventions in the *His Dark Materials* trilogy. Karen Traviss, a British author and a former newspaper journalist, remarks that Pullman's idea of the

daemons “is just so Bloody Good that it can stand on its own, apart from the book, and – more importantly – that it grips the imagination of the reader” (2005: 81). The magical effect of Pullman’s daemons on book fans, readers and netizens can be reflected in the discussion forums and games in the internet. In popular websites such as *Facebook* as well as the official website of *The Golden Compass*, numerous trivial psychological tests and fun games are designed to help readers find out what their own daemon would be like. While readers toy with the idea of having their own daemon manifested on their shoulder, not many can explain exactly the mystery of what daemons are, where they come from, and what they might mean. From the descriptions of daemons in Pullman’s series, we know that daemons are the inseparable, “external manifestation of our souls” (Traviss, 2005: 82) that have reason and the power of speech. They accompany their human hosts from birth and when their human hosts die, the daemons also vanish. Visible and tangible, they take on the forms of animals that their hosts deserve. For instance, servants have dog servants, whereas schemers such as Jotham Santelia and Sir Carlo Charles usually have snake or serpent daemons (Chabon, 2005). In a sense, according to Traviss (2005), a daemon is not unlike “a fashion accessory, a pet, an uncritical friend or even an alter ego” (82). Yet, apart from simply mirroring the character and personality of their human hosts, as Squires notes, daemons can also “act as a restraint, setting up an externalized internal dialogue” (2003: 25). Similarly, Dolgin (2005) also notices that daemons are like conscience from birth, “[T]hey are portrayed as more thoughtful than their humans” (78). Having mentioned the curious features of daemons, from a feminist perspective, the most relevant and revealing features about the daemons is that they are almost always the opposite sex from their human counterparts. I believe that Pullman is trying to use the

idea of opposite-sex daemons to correspond to Carl Jung's idea of the anima (for men) and animus (in the case of women). By using the idea of opposite-sex daemons, Pullman subtly puts forward the concept that both men and women possess masculine and feminine traits. No matter how 'manly' or 'womanly' a character appears to be, his / her daemon unavoidably shows features of the opposite sex.

In the next section, I will first briefly introduce Jung's idea of the anima and animus. Then, exemplifying from the *His Dark Materials* series, I will discuss how Pullman's daemons echo Jungian categories.

### **3.5.1. Jung's Theory of the Anima and Animus**

Although some critics have questioned the objectivity of Jung's (1964) theoretical analysis of the anima and animus (Adams, 2003), current Jungian practitioners still largely believe that men and women are basically different. Women are naturally born with feminine qualities such as receptivity, warmth, patience, and openness. Likewise, each man possesses certain masculine characteristics such as activity, decisiveness and logical thinking by virtue of being a man (Karaban, 1992). Nevertheless, as Karaban (1992) explains, due to the minority gene structure within every human being, we all incorporate both masculine and feminine psychological tendencies. While the persona shows the outer aspect of one's personality, the anima and animus manifest aspects of the unconscious, the true inner self that carries one's image of the opposite sex. For the male, the inner feminine "soul image" is called anima, which is usually a dominant female

image unconsciously shaped by feminine archetypes, personal experiences with the opposite sex (especially one's mother), as well as images and symbols of femininity culturally transmitted through mythology, art, fairy tales, religion. As Jung (1928) puts it in an essay on marriage,

Every man carries within him the eternal image of woman; not the image of this or that particular woman, but a definite feminine image (Cited in Kast, 2006: 116)

The anima can manifest itself in the forms of vague feelings and moods, artistic and / or spiritual development, prophetic hunches, receptiveness to the irrational, capacity for personal love, feeling for nature, etc. However, a man does not normally recognize the anima as part of his personal personality when he has conscious encounters with the contra-sexual inner figure in his mind. Instead, he projects his anima onto the women whom he meets, as though they carried the qualities of the anima. This explains the phenomenon of infatuation, or love at first sight, which men sometimes experience. The instant, powerful attraction to a woman whom he knows very little of, is urged by the anima. To illustrate this point, Jung discusses his relationship with his wife, Emma (Cited in Stevens, 1990). As Jung discloses, he was in love with Emma. In the haze of infatuation, he married her, thinking that he knew for sure that 'she' was the one. Yet, within a few years of their marriage, he realized that there were aspects of his anima which Emma could not carry. His unfulfilled anima caused him to be attracted by other women, getting him involved with multiple extramarital affairs. This created jealousy, anxiety, indignation and pain in Emma and it is said that Jung had to seek help from Freud in order to sort out the mess in the unhappy and complicated relationship. Apart



from extramarital affairs, the anima may also take the form of erotic fantasy when the man fails to cultivate a genuine relationship with the opposite sex. In that case, he may be driven to watch striptease shows or daydream on pornographic material:

The most frequent manifestations of the anima takes the form of erotic fantasy. Men may be driven to nurse their fantasies by looking at films and strip-tease shows, or by day-dreaming over pornographic material. This is a crude, primitive aspect of the anima, which becomes compulsive only when a man does not sufficiently cultivate his feeling relationships – when his feeling attitude toward his life has remained infantile (Franz, 1968: 191).

The anima projection and the quest for the matching other half will continue until a lasting relationship with an actual close-match can be found. If the close-match cannot be found, the man will be left feeling that something is missing in him for all his life.

Similarly, for the female, the inner masculine “soul image” is called animus. As Jung (1928 / 1966) writes, “The animus is the deposit, as it were, of all women’s ancestral experiences of man” (Cited in Kast, 2006: 115). However, the animus is said to be more complex than the anima. Being influenced by different male figures, a woman usually possesses multiple animus images. As reflected in dreams, the animus often appears as a group of men, which symbolizes the fact that the animus represents a collective, rather than one dominant masculine image. This collective-mindedness, as the Jungian theory (1964) claims, makes women habitually refer to ‘one’, ‘they’ or ‘everybody’ rather than the more egocentric ‘I’. They also have the tendency of using more “always”, “should”

and “ought to” (1964 / 1968: 415) in their speech<sup>2</sup>. In everyday life, the animus may manifest itself as the woman's recessive maleness. When dominated by the animus, the woman will show courage, objectivity, an urge for action, as well as the capacity for judgment and discrimination. She may also become more dogmatic, argumentative and over-generalizing. While a woman's animus brings her a set of unconscious masculine attributes and potentials, the woman does not usually recognize the animus as part of her personal personality. Rather, she projects her animus onto several men she encounters. Seeing her animus in men who seemingly carry similar characteristics and potentialities of her masculine soul image(s), she may suddenly feel a strong and compelling emotion towards some total strangers. Love at first sight, in this case, is an example of her animus projection. However, if the men she meets do not fit the mould of her preconceived notions, one after another, she will reject them. She will then have to spend her whole life searching for the missing male counterpart. As Tucker (2003) explains,

...all humans have a craving for an other half, also of the opposite sex which, if we could reunite it, would then mean that we could at least become truly whole individuals...But because we can never be joined up to our missing male or female counterparts, Jung believes that we must always go through life with the feeling that there is something important missing within us (Tucker, 2003: 142).

Reading Jung's descriptions of anima and animus today, one may recognize the sexist overtone, just as most critics and feminists have. Nevertheless, the concept of having a “transsexual Other within” (Jensen, 2004: 20) each individual is intriguing, and post-

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<sup>2</sup> Recent linguist research has found that this is not the case. The so-called features of feminine language, such as the collective mindedness in women's speech, are situational variable and have more to do with the speaker's power, status and confidence: “what is actually being communicated by “genderlect” is not so much masculinity or femininity but relative amounts of status and power” (Hoar, 1992: 129).

Jungians have found new ways of reading Jung. Much work has been done to interpret, correct, as well as dispute with “the diverse, contrasting, even “chaotic” developments” (ibid) in Jung’s analytical psychology. Whether Pullman’s idea of daemons in *His Dark Materials* is borrowed from or inspired by Jung’s anima and animus, we do not know. Nevertheless, there are a number of similarities between them. To examine how Pullman implicitly incorporates traits of the opposite sex into the protagonist, in the following, I will look into the various animus images created by Pullman and played by the shape-shifting Pan, Lyra’s daemon.

### **3.5.2. Pantalaimon as Lyra’s Animus**

Pullman’s creation of the clever, resourceful and unrelenting female protagonist, Lyra, has impressed many, but few realize that Pantalaimon (Pan) may have contributed to Lyra’s unwavering character and unbreakable will power. Tucker (2003) is one of the few who points out the possibility that Lyra may have gained and refilled her power from Pan. He suggests that since Lyra has her daemon, Pantalaimon to give her all the support and love she needs, she does not have the problem of the missing animus. This might explain why Lyra, a ten-year-old girl, can conjure up so much courage and bravery throughout the odyssey, which is extraordinary in children’s books and hardly possible in reality.

Looking at the different forms and roles played by Pan in the *His Dark Materials* series, I agree that Pan, as Lyra’s daemon, has demonstrated physical power, strengths and traits

that Lyra lacks at times. As far as I am concerned, Pan can be a navigator, a bodyguard, a soul-mate, a mastermind, an adviser, a playmate, a pet, and also the conscience of Lyra. Since the three books are full of various descriptions of Lyra and Pan, in the following, I will randomly choose some descriptions that demonstrate the special relationship between Lyra and her animus-like daemon.

### **3.5.3. Pantalaimon as the Bodyguard**

One of the most obvious animus features that Pan possesses can be observed through the way he plays the masculine role of a bodyguard – Pan is the one who navigates and protects his host from danger and harm. For instance, at the beginning of chapter six of *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra finds herself lost in the dark alleys in the cold night. Knowing that Lyra cannot see things clearly at night, Pan makes use of his form-changing ability and turns himself into a wildcat, “[scans] the dark all around with his night-piercing eyes” (1995: 99), so that Lyra will have some sense of direction. As Lyra’s navigator in the dark, he is also more alert than Lyra when facing danger. At first, Lyra does not know where she is heading to. She is not aware of what is waiting for her in the dark. It is Pan who first gives her the signal of danger ahead. Sensing that danger is near, nervously and restlessly, Pan changes himself into the animal forms of a bat, an owl, and then a wildcat. Catching his panic, Lyra finally sees “two men running at her, one from each side, the nearer holding a throwing-net” (1995: 103). In Pullman’s words, many times, if Pan hasn’t reminded Lyra “of the danger they [are] all in, she might have lost all her sense of proportion” (1995: 343). Then, to intimidate the kidnapper and protect Lyra

from the villain's daemon, which is a savage-looking fox, Pan plays the role of a bodyguard for his host. He screams harshly and launches himself as a fierce leopard so that the man has to dodge aside. Next, to escape swiftly from the enemies and to remind Lyra not to be get boxed in a corner, Pan becomes an eagle, swoops at his host and cries, "Left! Left!" (1995: 103).

In chapter three of the first episode, Pan also becomes a lion and roar at the ghosts of the dead Scholars who try to haunt Lyra in the middle of the night. Similarly, in chapter 13 of the same book, Pan is fully awake while Lyra is sleeping fast. He willingly plays the role of an attentive and cautious guard by transforming himself into "the shape of an Arctic fox" (1995: 218).

#### **3.5.4. Pantalaimon as the Soul-mate**

Apart from protecting and assisting Lyra with his physical power, Pan is also a tender and intimate companion who can read Lyra's mind, pacify and cuddle her when she feels lonely, scared and helpless. In chapters 12 and 13 of *Northern Lights* (1995), when Lyra is frightened by the severed child who has no daemon, she clutches Pan, "with both hands, hard, against her heart" (1995: 214) and clings to Pan for support. Pan also shares the same feelings with his host, especially when she feels upset and sad. As Pullman puts it, "She [Lyra] and Pantalaimon could feel each other's thoughts" (1995: 236). When Lyra sobs for Tony, a little boy whose daemon has been cut away from him, Pan whimpers too. There is "a passionate pity and sorrow for the half-boy" (1995: 215) in both of them. As

Lyra compassionately puts “her arms around the skinny little form to hold him safe” (1995: 217), she also feels that Pan’s impulse is “to reach out and cuddle the little half-child, to lick him and gentle him and warm him as his own daemon would have done” (1995: 217). When Lyra gets passionately furious with people who joke about the way the half-child clings onto an old dried fish as if it were his daemon, Pan too, changes into an angry, “snarling snow leopard, just like Lord Asriel’s daemon” (1995: 220). Pan is also responsive to Lyra’s needs. When Lyra feels cold, he “becomes a soft, warm ermine and drapes himself tenderly around her neck” (Chabon, 2005: 6). In chapter 14, when Lyra gasps “Pan!” (1995: 234) for help because she is pushed flat down into the snow, tied up and sent to Bolvangar, Pan comforts his petrified host as if he is a lifeguard, “I’m here, ssh, I’ll help you breathe. Keep still” (ibid). He then transforms himself into a mouse, uses his mouse-paws to release Lyra from the hood that is crammed over her head. Then, knowing that Lyra is filled with the horrible fear of being ‘severed’, he nestles close against her, calms her nerves by promising his host, “I’ll fight” (1995: 235). Last but not least, as shown in the last chapter of Book One, Lyra would not be able to continue with the odyssey had Pan not encouraged his host to conjure up her courage. On page 398, for a moment, Lyra is afraid of going further, knowing that friends like Iorek Byrnison, Farder Coram, Serafina Pekkala and Lee Scoresby cannot follow her and help. Seeing that Lyra lacks courage to get to the other end of the universe through the torn Aurora, Pan insists and encourages her warmly, “We *could*...We came all this way, didn’t we? We *could* do it” (1995: 398).

### 3.5.5. Pantalaimon as the Mastermind

At other times, Pan also shows intelligence and capability of being Lyra's adviser and mastermind. Often, he can think faster and behave more maturely than Lyra. He seems to be able to predict and plan one step further before Lyra can see the general picture clearly. For example, in chapter 14 of *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is kidnapped and sent to Bolvangar, the evil camp of the Gobblers. When the men there ask her for her name, Pan wittily warns Lyra by bristling, so that Lyra would not be silly enough to give her true name to the men who work for Mrs Coulter. He also changes himself into a goldfinch, flies to her ears and advises her to act "dull-witted and compliant" (1995: 241) in front of Sister Clara, a woman who works for the Gobblers, "Be stupid and dim. Be really slow and stupid" (1995: 239). The first heroic act that Lyra does, as readers of the novels and audience of the film know, is that she manages to get into the Bolvangar, blow the station up, free all the abducted children and save them from intercision. However, reading the first episode closely, one will discover that Pan is the one who directs the entire mission impossible in the Bolvangar. First of all, it is Pan who cleverly urges Lyra to smash all the fire alarms in the corridor so that everyone comes out and looks up and down for the 'fire'. Secondly, it is Pan's idea to set the kitchen on fire,

By this time she was near the kitchen, and **Pantalaimon flashed a thought into her mind** [My emphasis], and she darted in. A moment later she had turned on all the gas taps and flung a match at the nearest burner. Then she dragged a bag of flour from a shelf and hurled it at the edge of a table so it burst and filled the air with white, because she had heard that flour will explode if it's treated like that near a flame (1995: 288).

When the frightened children run, “shouting, pushing, crying, jostling” (ibid) and wonder where the exit is, like a commander, Pan shows everyone the direction to the main entrance so that the crowd can get out of the compound that is about to explode, “This way! This way!” (1995: 289). Then, knowing that Lyra is anxious about finding Roger, her long lost friend in the chaotic fire site, Pan immediately transforms into a keen-eyed owl and hoots to help with the difficult search. As the children start walking out into the freezing snow, Pan draws on the experience of Farder Coram, a skillful traveller of the North and reminds Lyra to keep the children going in the cold, “If they lie down they’re finished. You know what Farder Coram said...” (1995: 295). Afterwards, Pan also instructs Lyra how to encourage and get each child to make out the deep trail Iorek Byrnison has ploughed in the snow, so that all of them can go back to the haven of the gyptians.

### **3.5.6. Pantalaimon as the Conscience**

Apart from instructing Lyra in what works best, Pan is also the conscience that disciplines his host, warning her what she should not do. As Pan puts in, “It’s normally you who’s greedy and nosy and me who has to warn you not to do things” (1997: 270). In addition, Pan can also tell Lyra how her heart truly feels before she comes to understand and realize her true feelings. For instance, in chapter five of *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is trained to dress up prettily and behave perfectly at cocktail parties and occasions with important, “glamorous people to talk to and be admired by” (1995: 83). She is taught “[h]ow to wash one’s own hair; how to judge which colours suited one; how to say



no in such a charming way that no offence was given; how to put on lipstick, powder, scent" (1995: 84), etc. Even though Lyra does not always enjoy the lessons and she often thinks of finding Roger, her missing friend, she finds it hard to resist Mrs Coulter, whom she thinks is "so kind and wise" (1995: 77). It is Pan who first asks Lyra when they are going to run away. He tells Lyra honestly that it is against her nature to be "confined and cramped by this polite life" (1995: 86),

You don't really want to stand around at the cocktail party being all sweet and pretty. She [Mrs Coulter]'s just making a pet out of you (1995: 86).

As Lyra continues to ignore her inner feelings and pretends to be sweet, innocent, polite and attentive at the cocktail party, Pan shows her his contempt and disgust immediately. He stretches his wings and chirrup loudly beside his host. At first, Lyra refuses to admit that she feels like "a universal pet" (1995: 88). Yet, gradually, she comes to see that what Pan says is true. She realizes that what she truly hopes and needs is to go North to find and rescue her friend. Having Pan as a reminder, she finally discovers that she has not been honest to her own feelings. She realizes she was blind in following Mrs Coulter's teaching and instructions.

In chapter eight of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Pan plays the role of Lyra's conscience again when he comforts Will by licking him. In the scene, Will is trying to learn how to use the Subtle Knife without much success. The little finger and the ring finger have been cut away from his left hand in an accident. The wounds make him feel weak and sick. Seeing Will sobbing and trembling, Pan forgets about the taboo that prevents "one person from

touching another's daemon" (1997: 191). He comforts Will by lying his head on Will's knee, gazing at him with "melting, sorrowing eyes" (ibid), and licking Will's wounded hand repeatedly. At the beginning, Lyra feels strange and is "breathtaken" (ibid). Although she knows that what Pan did is kind, she is shocked that her daemon would suddenly break the taboo without asking her for permission. As Pullman describes, the prohibition against human-daemon contact goes "so deep that even in battle no warrior would touch an enemy's daemon. It was utterly forbidden" (1995: 143). Thus, she cannot understand why Pan would, on his own initiative, lick the wounds of another person. This has never happened before. Later on in chapter 13 of the same book, Lyra asks Pan, "Why'd you do that, anyway? You never asked me if you could. I couldn't believe it when you did that" (1997: 271). Only in chapter 35 of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000) does Lyra truly understand Pan's action: she has fallen in love with Will, "I know what I must have felt all the time: I love you, Will, I love you –" (2000: 492). In chapter 37, Lyra and Will break the taboo as Pan has broken it previously in Book 2 – they touch and stroke each other's daemon, with joy and pleasure,

Will...moved his hand from Lyra's wrist and stroked the red-gold fur of her daemon...With a racing heart she responded in the same way: she put her hand on the silky warmth of Will's daemon, and as her fingers tightened in the fur she knew that Will was feeling exactly what she was (2000: 527 - 528).

Compared to Lyra, Pan is more sensitive and honest to her inner feelings. Long before Lyra realizes her love for Will, Pan fearlessly does what he wants to do, which is also a reflection of the latent desire of Lyra.

### **3.5.7. Pantalaimon as the Playmate**

In scenes that are fun and relaxing, Pan is also a lovely, humourous playmate who pleases his host, driving all her troubles away. For example, in chapter four of *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra takes a bath in Mrs Coulter's beautiful, well-decorated bathroom. After the washing, Lyra finds that she looks different from the Lyra she knew in the mirror. Seeing Lyra's new look, Pan teases her by turning himself into the form of Mrs Coulter's daemon and then making faces to Lyra, "Pantalaimon, who was imitating the form of Mrs Coulter's daemon, crouched on the edge of the basin pulling faces at her" (1995: 76). The cheeky acts of Pan make Lyra push Pan into the soapy water. Then in chapter nine of the same book, when Lyra feels too cold to play around on the sailing boat, Pan becomes a seagull, leaps into the air and flies high so that Lyra can feel with him as he flies. Also, in chapter 13 of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), Lyra wonders what animal form Pan will eventually settle in when he finally stops changing. Cheekily and playfully, Pan changes himself into a pig, squeals and makes Lyra laughs, "He changed into a pig and grunted and squealed and snorted till she laughed at him" (1997: 271).

### **3.5.8. Implications of Pullman's Daemons**

Just as readers start to think that only characters in Lyra's world have daemons, in *The Subtle Knife* (1997), through the conversation between Lyra and Will, Pullman cleverly makes the point that in fact, every human has got an opposite-sex daemon inside him / her, even though the daemon is "hidden away" and the person is not aware of the

daemon's existence. As Lyra explains to Will, "You *have got* a daemon...Inside you...You wouldn't be human else...Your daemon en't *separate* from you. It's you. A part of you. You're part of each other" (1997: 26). This point is later on readdressed in Book Three – Lyra is right. Everyone, including Will, whose daemon is invisible, does have an opposite-sex daemon. In chapter 21, Will finally realizes that he too, has a daemon. He feels a terrible physical and mental agony when he gets into the boat to the land of the dead, leaving his daemon on the desolate shore, "It felt as if an iron hand had gripped his heart and was pulling it out between his ribs...it was mental, too: something secret and private was being dragged into the open where it had no wish to be" (2000: 295 - 300). In chapter 36, the readers are reassured that Will really has a daemon. Will's daemon accompanies Pan around before going back to Will and is named "Kirjava" (2000: 501) by Serafina. Interestingly, Pullman grants Kirjava a voice in the last episode so that she can share her feelings with the readers, "I didn't know I was born until I was torn away from his heart" (2000: 500). All the way through, one of the subtle messages Pullman seems to convey to the readers is: even if we do not recognize the contra-sexual qualities in us as part of our inner personality, both masculine and feminine qualities exist in all of us. It is as if there is a man in every woman and a woman in every man. The conventional gender traits to which most of us unwittingly conform, in a sense, may well be social construct. Such gender stereotypes can be broken and subverted more easily when we are young. To children and pre-adults, changing and expressing gender identities according to their ever-changing self is possible. It would be as easy and simple as children's daemons in Lyra's world changing their forms.

Yet, in the trilogy, Pullman also states that the fantastic form-changing ability is only owned by children's daemons, not adult's daemons. This phenomenon is mentioned again and again by different characters and the omniscient narrator in the novels, "As people became adult, their daemons lost the power to change and assumed one shape, keeping it permanently" (Pullman, 1995: 49). For this, critics have provided various interpretations, but Pullman has not given a clear explanation about what he wants to imply. Personally, I find Judith Butler's idea of (gender) performativity most relevant in explaining the portrayal of the fluid form of children's daemons. In *Gender Trouble* (1999), Butler argues that "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results." (1999: 33). Gender is therefore "a sequence of repeated acts that harden into the appearance of something that's been there all along." (Salih, 2002: 66). In other words, femininity, masculinity and heterosexual identities are all everyday performativity. They are constructed, represented, repeated and in turn, reinforced as if they are ordained by Nature, but they are not. They are fabricated at the moment when they are performed. In light of this, the different animal forms manifested by children's daemons can be read as the multiple, fluid performativities expressed by children. As they learn from their societies what 'male' and 'female' mean, they adjust their behaviour to fit into those standard, traditional definitions. Gradually, children construct a concrete performativity, and have it hardened. With regard to the loss of freedom of self expression, their daemons stop changing and remain in one form, one shape for the rest of their lives.

Having discussed Pullman's representations of Lyra, the protagonist and Pantalaimon, her daemon, now, I will move on and concentrate on the representation of another female character / antagonist well-known to all readers of the trilogy – Mrs Coulter.

### **3.6. The Reinvention of the 'Femmes Fatales'**

The image of femme fatale does not only appear in popular culture, but also in art and literature, which includes children's literature. For instance, in popular children's stories *Snow White* and C.S. Lewis's *The Chronicles of Narnia* (1950 – 1956), the main antagonist is often portrayed as a beautiful but scheming, powerful and dangerous woman. At the end of the plot, the femme fatale is often punished and killed for the evil deeds she has done. As I have discussed in Module Two, feminists point out that such negative portrayal of strong, independent female figures is a prejudice against women and a reflection of the biased assumptions held by sexists and misogynists.

In the portrayal of Mrs Coulter, has *His Dark Materials* presented gender stereotypes the same way as other classic children's books have, or has it suggested other alternative, creative or even subversive gender forms?

In the following section, I will show the common features possessed by the archetypal femmes fatales. Then, I will look into Pullman's representation of Mrs Coulter. I will discuss whether it is just a perpetuation of the typical 'femme fatale' stereotype, or a

reinvention that challenges readers to open up more possible interpretations of the female character.

### **3.6.1. The Femme Fatale Archetype**

'Femme fatale', a phrase which means 'deadly woman' in French, refers to the archetypal female figure whose irresistible beauty, charm and sexual allure has the power to lure men, exhaust them, depriving them of the ability to make rational decisions, and finally leading them into dangerous and deadly situations. According to Praz (1951), the archetype exists in folklore, myth and history of almost every culture in every century. Typical examples of the iconic figure include Lilith, Eve and Salome in the Judaeo-Christian Bible, Lamia, the Sphinx, Circe in ancient Greek mythology, as well as Danji, Bao Si, Lu Zhi, Zhao Feiyan and Diao Chan in Chinese myths and history, which I will discuss in further detail in the next chapter. The most intriguing and menacing feature about the femme fatale is her refusal to conform to the mainstream, traditional female gender role. As Hedgecock (2008) explains:

...the femme fatale is a threat to bourgeois ideology in that she threatens to destroy the structure of the family and obscure the definitions assigned to domestic women (2008: 3).

Instead of being an obedient daughter, faithful wife, loving mother or other ideologically acceptable female figure who "gives love, understanding (or at least forgiveness), asks very little in return...and is generally visually passive or static" (Place, 1980: 50), the femme fatale challenges the values of conventional marriage and ordinary family life.

She uses sex for pleasure and / or as a tool to get what and whom she wants. If needs be, she may also make use of lies, poison and other lethal weapons to leach men's virility and manipulate them the way she wants. Interestingly, while some considered the femme fatale archetype as "an example of female independence" (History of Television.ca, 2009) and a possible site of female subjectivity, other feminist literary critics condemned this archetype as misogynist and a "symptom of male fears about feminism" (Doane, 1991: 2). The main argument of the condemnation is that although the femme fatale may seem to enjoy more freedom and power than the good women, she is almost always represented as the object of the 'male gaze' in the text (Mulvey, 1975 / 1999). In other words, the heterosexual male is always in the subject position. He has the right to look and the power to decide whom should be looked at. The femme fatale, on the other hand, loses the upper hand in the power relation. Her body parts, her clothing, her words and her movements are scrutinized and sexualized as a fetish object under the male gaze. Relegated to the inferior status of an object, her agency is denied.

Having discussed the femme fatale as an archetype, I will analyze the character of Mrs Coulter according to the feminist theoretical considerations in order to see if she is meant to be a typical femme fatale figure in Pullman's trilogy.

### **3.6.2. Mrs Coulter as the Irresistible Seductress**

As revealed by various characters in Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, Mrs Coulter, the head of the Church's General Oblation Board, is an attractive, ambitious and



“monstrously clever” (Pullman, 2000: 149) woman who seduces powerful men, climbs up the social ladder and earns the status she wants to achieve. In chapter seven of *Northern Lights* (1995), John Faa tells Lyra the inconvenient truth about her mother: Mrs Coulter is not well-born but she is well-known for her beauty and cleverness, “... those who saw her said she was very beautiful” (1995: 123). She married a powerful man called Edward Coulter, a close adviser and a rising man of the King’s party. Yet, she committed adultery with Lord Asriel and had an illegitimate baby with her lover. She had to flee from her husband, who, in furious anger, followed after his unfaithful wife “in a murderous passion” (ibid). When her husband and Lord Asriel met, they fought and Lord Asriel killed Mr Coulter. As a punishment, all of Lord Asriel’s property and land were confiscated. Mrs Coulter, on the other hand, “wanted nothing to do with it” (1995: 124). She walked away from her baby Lyra, abandoning her. She then continued to climb up the social ladder and gain power, “Mrs Coulter’s friends in the Church helped her set up this Oblation Board...and there she was, as powerful in her way as Lord Asriel was in his” (1995: 128). In chapter 19 of the same book, Lyra and the readers are also informed that Mrs Coulter has not stopped ensnaring men for her hidden purposes. As Jotham Santelia, the Regius Professor of Cosmology at the University of Gloucester reveals, Mrs Coulter has the charm and power to besot and maneuver Iofur Rakinson, the powerful King of the Bears,

Iofur was besotted with her. Couldn’t stop talking about her. Would do anything for her. If she wants Lord Asriel kept a hundred miles away, that’s what will happen. Anything for Mrs Coulter, anything. He’s going to name his capital city after her, did you know that? (1995: 332)

Like all femmes fatales, Mrs. Coulter's physical appearance is also under the male gaze. Although literally, words and descriptions in the novels can only be read but not gazed at, the descriptions often tend to put Mrs Coulter in the focus of attention. Her hair, her voice, her complexion, her body, her clothes, her fragrance, her body movement, etc. are described in detail. By using the perspective of the male character, Pullman invites readers to imagine using the male gaze on Mrs Coulter. For example, in chapter 11 of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), Will first meets Mrs Coulter in the cave where she hides Lyra. Through the eyes of Will, the readers are invited to look closely at Mrs Coulter: it is said that "[h]er hair shone" (145), "her dark eyes glittered" (ibid) and "beautiful" (151), "her hand...firm and cool and soft" (150), "her bare legs gleamed golden in the sunlight" (145), "her figure" (144) "graceful" (ibid), her sweet and gentle smile unsettling, and her voice "low and intoxicating" (145). The narrator also discloses that Will finds himself "disturbed" by "the fresh smell of her body" (147) and "the fragrance of some scent she was wearing" (ibid). Mrs Coulter's small body movements are also scrutinized, "She was sitting at her ease...with a book on her lap" (144), "she...[leans] forward so that her hair swung down on either side of her face" (147), "her arms rose to push back that shining hair" (151). Interestingly, Mrs Coulter's beauty seems to have the magic to distort male's sensations. With her delicate figure, even her ordinary khaki traveller's clothes "looked like the highest of high fashion" (144). The red blossom she "pinned to her shirt-front looked like the most elegant of jewels" (ibid). As far as I am concerned, such detailed study of the face, body parts, body figure, fragrance, voice and body language rarely occurs to another male or female character in Pullman's books. Under the male gaze, Mrs Coulter becomes the fetish, sexualized object.

### **3.6.3. Mrs Coulter as the Evil Torturer**

Besides beauty, Mrs Coulter also possesses other characteristics of a femme fatale. The interrogation scene in chapter two of *The Subtle Knife* (1997) is a perfect revelation of the dark and diabolic side of her personality. As Serafina Pekkala has witnessed, Mrs Coulter is a callous and experienced inquisitor who knows well how to torture people. She is good at building up mental stress and anxiety in the defenceless captivated, “You will suffer...Oh, there is more suffering to come. We have a thousand years of experience in this Church of ours. We can draw out your suffering endlessly. Tell us about the child.” (1997: 39). When she speaks, Pullman describes her voice as “all bronze” (40), “ringing with passion” (ibid). She also knows how to create huge physical pain by using ultra-violence. To make the witch talk, Mrs Coulter breaks the witch's fingers one by one, each with a “sickening crack” (39) followed by “a flood of sobbing” (40). Worse still, even when violence is not necessary, Mrs Coulter still uses it. Towards the end of the horrible interrogation, when the witch is talking, Mrs Coulter slaps her hard just because she is impatient. The perverse and sadistic nature of the woman has made her fully qualified as a femme fatale.

### **3.6.4. Mrs Coulter as the Femme Castratrice**

The most threatening and disgusting aspect of Mrs Coulter is that she is the person-in-charge of an uncanny project called ‘intercision’. With the aim of preventing the onset of “troublesome thoughts and feelings” (1995: 285) in puberty, the General Oblation Board

performs a series of experimental, “obscure and unofficial” (1995: 375) operations that cut daemons away from children so that they will grow up without feeling any passion. Mrs Coulter tries to explain the unnatural, disgusting “little cut” (1995: 284) as beneficial, “...your daemon’s a wonderful friend and companion when you’re young, but at the age we call puberty, the age you’re coming to very soon, darling, daemons bring all sort of troublesome thoughts and feelings...A quick little operation before that, and you’re never troubled again” (1995: 285). Nonetheless, Lyra hates it “with a furious passion” (ibid). She cannot tolerate her daemon being touched by others, not to mention having her daemon torn away. In chapter 16 of *Northern Lights* (1995), when Pan is seized by human hands, Lyra feels that the alien hand has “reached right inside where no hand had a right to be, and wrenched at something deep and precious” (1995: 276). As Hines (2005) points out, the sexual connotations of touching daemons in the trilogy suggest that the daemon does not only refer to the soul or the spirit, but also the sexual organ. Intercision, therefore, can be seen as a metaphor for the uncivilized practice of castration and female circumcision, which are both religious in origin. In chapter 21 of the same book, Lord Asriel also associates intercision with castration, “There was a precedent. Something like it [intercision] had happened before. Do you know what the word *castration* means? It means removing the sexual organs of a boy so that he never develops the characteristics of a man” (1995: 374). Indeed, in many ways, intercision is like castration and female circumcision. In the process of intercision, the daemon is cut off to prevent the onset of passion and emotions in puberty. Castration and female circumcision, on the other hand, demand that some natural and sensitive part of a person be removed in order to prevent maturity and sexual pleasure. Being the person-in-charge of intercision, Mrs Coulter is

bound to be the dangerous “femme castratrice” (Creed, 1994: 122) that creates horror and disgust, in particular in male readers.

### 3.6.5. Mrs Coulter as the Loving Mother

While the female protagonist shows various wicked characteristics of a femme fatale, she surprises the readers by showing pure tenderness and “sentimental piety” (2000: 211) of a good mother in the later part of the series. As Lord Asriel observes, the femme fatale has been tamed and softened when she meets Lyra, her daughter, “She’s drawn your poison, Marisa. She’s taken your teeth out” (2000: 211). When she gradually discovers how much she loves Lyra, like every ordinary mother, Mrs Coulter thinks highly of her own child. She describes Lyra as “clever”, “[b]rave, generous, loving” (ibid). She also refers to Lyra in terms of endearment, such as “my dear one” (169), “my love”, “[m]y heart’s treasure”, “my little child”, “my only one” and “[m]y darling daughter” (ibid). Anxious about her missing daughter’s safety, she compares the pain and fear she feels to a heartache, “My Lyra – you’d do better to tear the fibres from my heart” (2000: 210). Most importantly, when she realizes Lyra is the new Eve whom the Church intends to kill, she risks everything she has, including the Church’s trust in her, to keep Lyra from danger. The situation she puts herself into is so difficult that even Mrs Coulter herself cannot fathom,

...she wondered what in the world she thought she was doing, and whether she had gone mad, and over and over again, what would happen when the church found out. The golden monkey was right. She wasn’t only hiding Lyra. She was hiding her own eyes (2000: 8)

Because of love, “[t]he pitiless agent of the church, the fanatical persecutor of children, the inventor of hideous machines” (Pullman, 2000: 211) transforms herself into a warm, loving mother. As Rabe (2005) writes, “Mrs. Coulter risked everything to keep her daughter safe, going so far as to drug Lyra and hide her in a cave. No threat was too great to face” (94). To a certain extent, Pullman has, through the miraculous transformation of the character, re-invented the femme fatale archetype.

### **3.6.6. Mrs Coulter as the Redeemer**

Near the end of the story, Pullman introduces some more murkiness in the portrayal of Mrs Coulter. In chapter 31 of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), Mrs Coulter changes herself from a selfish, heartless antagonist to a heroic, virtuous redeemer. The femme fatale reflects on the evil deeds she did and confesses she has been “corrupt and full of wickedness” (426). She then reveals to Lord Asriel and the readers that she too, has the power to love, and it has grown in her heart like a mustard-seed, “...I love Lyra...I love her so much my heart is bursting with it...the mustard-seed had taken root and was growing, and the little green shoot was splitting my heart wide open” (426 - 427). The love for her daughter has made her so fearless and strong that she can sacrifice her own life – “to give Lyra time to find her daemon, and then time to live and grow up” (426), Mrs Coulter and Lord Asriel join hands and attack Metatron. Together, they fall into the abyss and both parents of Lyra sacrifice their lives. Through the self-sacrifice, Mrs Coulter compensates for all the evil deeds she has done previously. Pullman has also given an important message to the readers: we should learn to avoid seeing things in

terms of absolutes. People, like the characters in his novels, can be good and evil, right and wrong, foul and fair in different contexts. Stereotypes in his fiction can be, and are meant to be overthrown. In the next section, I will continue to look at transgression in the portrayal of female characters in *His Dark Materials* (1995 - 2000).

### **3.7. The Portrayal of Marginalized Gypsy Women**

While Pullman surprises readers with the re-inscription of Eve, the invention of daemons and the re-invention of the femme fatale, he does not forget to introduce the subversive notion in the representations of other female characters who play supporting roles in the trilogy. For instance, ideological assumptions about the marginalized, such as the gypsy female, are broken. In the following, I will give a brief introduction to the stereotype of the gypsy female. Then, I will discuss Pullman's portrayal of Ma Costa in order to see if the gypsy woman is represented in a different way.

#### **3.7.1. Who are the Gypsies?**

Though there is no written history about the origin and early history of gypsies, linguistic and genetic evidence indicates that the ethnic minority originated from northern India. According to the *Encyclopedia Online Britannica* (2009), the 'Rom' people mean "any member of the traditionally itinerant people who originated in northern India but live in modern times worldwide, principally in Europe". The gypsies refer to themselves as *Rom*, meaning 'Man', but because of the lack of a country of origin, they are known by many

names, most misleading. For instance, they are given ambiguous names like “gypsies”, “gypcians”, “(E)gitanos, Gitans” (Hancock, 2008: 182), etc., because the English public and Europeans thought they were Egyptians. Apart from their origin, gypsy people are also recognized by their gyptian tongue. Hancock also notes that most gypsies speak Romany, “a language closely related to the modern Indo-European languages of northern India” (ibid). As they settled in different countries, however, they were exposed to multiple languages and they adopted words “from those with whom its speakers have come in contact” (Hancock, 1998: 116). Many of the Romani dialects have decayed and the original grammatical structure of the language is lost.

### **3.7.2. The Gypsy Female Stereotype**

Having witnessed the displacement, migration, immigration, and exile experienced by the gypsies, the general public sees gypsies as a race “living in the margins” (Stanley and Zinn, 2007: 1). Social anthropologists, novelists, journalists, Hollywood and the non-Romani world depict representations of gypsies, factual and fictional, and associate the gypsies with exoticism, romanticism, escapism, unemployment and poverty. Such exotic, sometimes negative images are then reinforced and stereotyped in literary texts and the media. Till this day, the gypsies are still portrayed and considered as homeless, nomadic wanderers, despite the fact that the majority of gypsies live in permanent housing as most of us do. In the *Yahoo! Answers* website (2009), internet users are asked to provide suggested answers for the question, “What are some stereotypes associated with Gypsies?” Most of the descriptions fall into the unpleasant ‘gypsy stereotypes’: stealers,



fortune-tellers, criminals, beggars, vagabonds, strangers in ragged clothes, illegal refugees, street musicians, circus dancers, etc. The gypsy female, on the other hand, is often sexualized and portrayed as assertive, free-spirit lovers. The following is a typical romanticized description of the gypsy female,

A very handsome race, the women especially. These bold, brown, beautiful women only make one astonished to think how such eyes, teeth and figures can exist in the stifling atmosphere of their tents (Cited in Hancock, 2008: 187).

While gypsy women are sexualized and exoticized under the male gaze, they are also negatively portrayed as debauched lovers, irresponsible mothers, witches and even children stealers who are unwilling to play the traditional female role in the domestic sphere. Bercovici (1929 / 1983) claims that the spirit-free, ruleless gypsy nature is reflected in the gyptian language,

The Gypsy vocabulary lacks the words "duty" and "possession." This reflects their unwillingness to settle down, live in houses, obey the law, educate their children, be employed by others – and helps to explain their almost universal persecution (viii).

Also, in Piers Anthony's novel, *Being a Green Mother* (1987), gypsies are written as child kidnappers in the story, "Gypsies!...Beware – they steal children!" (18) The gypsy female stereotype is, to a certain extent, not unlike Lilith, the beautiful, untamable and evil infant-killer in the Judaeo-Christian Bible. In the next section, I will discuss how Philip Pullman represents the gypsy female by looking into the portrayal of Ma Costa, the gyptian queen in Lyra's Oxford.

### 3.7.3. Pullman's Representation of Ma Costa, the Gypsy Female

In Pullman's *Northern Lights* (1995), the female character Ma Costa is like a subversive parody of the gypsy female stereotype – rather than being a sexy lover, jobless wanderer, irresponsible mother and child stealer, Ma Costa is the “mighty” (1995: 54), “powerful” (105) “boat-mother” (105) of the entire houseboat of the gyptian family, which is “noted for the grandeur and sumptuousness of their boat” (ibid). Unlike seductresses such as Mrs Coulter, Ma Costa does not have a pretty face or an attractive, delicate figure. She is described as “a woman with lungs of brass and leather” (54) and “a stout powerful woman with grey hair” (105). With “hands like bludgeons” (ibid), “[s]he could snap your backbone like a twig”(55). Men yell and flee from her as she swears and slaps them “like a prize-fighter” (56). Her daemon, though, is a beautiful hawk with “fierce yellow eyes” (56).

Although she does not have the charming appearance of a lover, she is respected by many, including Lyra, “Lyra admired Ma Costa greatly” (55). In Lyra's eyes, Ma Costa is reliable, strong and unbreakable, “Ma Costa trudged up the steps as if nothing in the world could possibly either stop her or make her go more quickly” (115). Being the mother of two boys, Billy Costa and Tony Costa, she is also a child protector, a diligent housekeeper and a keen cook in the gyptian family. According to the narration, all children are “precious and extravagantly loved” (1995: 56) in the gyptian boat-world. The caring, motherly features of Ma Costa re-occur several times again in the following chapters. For instance, as John Faa recounts in chapter seven of *Northern Lights* (1995), it

is disclosed that Ma Costa was in fact the nurse who took care of baby Lyra at Lord Asriel's house. When Mr Coulter burst in for revenge with his gun, Ma Costa protected Lyra by hiding with the baby. After the trial of Lord Asriel, Ma Costa still offered to take care of baby Lyra because she was worried about how Mrs Coulter would treat Lyra. Then, in chapter six of Book One, it is Ma Costa again who protects Lyra from the attack of the Turk traders. Lyra feels relieved immediately when she sees the Costas' boat, "Oh, God, Pan, we're safe!" (104). In Pullman's description, the gyptian woman has a warm, gentle and loving heart. She embraces Lyra like a mother does a child,

...the boat-mother set her hands on either side of Lyra's face, and her daemon...bent gently to lick Pantaimon's wildcat-head. Then Ma Costa folded her great arms around Lyra and pressed her to her breast (106).

Interestingly, the presence of Ma Costa is also often associated with delicious food. When the character is first mentioned in the story, Lyra recalls that Ma Costa has "given her hot gingerbread on three [occasions]" (1995: 54). When Lyra gets on her boat in chapter six, she tells the child, "I've got hot drink in you" (106). Then, she prepares and serves hot milk to Lyra:

Ma Costa was setting a saucepan of milk on the iron stove and riddling the grate to stir the fire up (ibid).

In the morning, she makes breakfast for Lyra and the family, "Sleep well? ...I'll make ye some breakfast" (107). The way she cooks in the kitchen is described in detail repeatedly, "...reaching for a frying pan...[s]he sliced a couple of rashers of bacon into the frying pan, and cracked an egg to go with them" (ibid). Then, for the supper in the evening, "Ma

Costa had the frying-pan going, with a couple of fat eels hissing and sputtering and the kettle on for potato-powder" (114), so that "the smells of frying fish, of smokeleaf, of jenniver-spirit" (ibid) "rose into the still air" (ibid). In brief, the character of Ma Costa is the gypsy female stereotype in reverse – she is represented as a gentle, nurturing, mother-like figure.

### 3.8. Summary

To sum up, in this chapter, I looked into the representations of four characters of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000) – (1) Lyra Belacqua, the protagonist, (2) Pantalaimon, Lyra's daemon, (3) Mrs Coulter, the female protagonist, and (4) Ma Costa, the gyptian queen. I argued that through the portrayals of these characters, gender stereotypes in myths and classics are broken; female archetypes are rewritten, reinterpreted and re-invented. After the brief introduction of Pullman's personal background, in part 3.4, I compared Lyra with Eve in the Holy Bible. I found that Lyra the new Eve has turned the gender stereotypes of the Biblical text upside down. Now Eve is the first autonomous being to be mentioned in the series, the most significant protagonist with a male helper, and the heroine who plays the Christ-like role, manifesting Christian virtues such as love, self-sacrifice, and devotion to the truth. In part 3.5, I explained how the Jungian notion of the anima and animus can be found in Pullman's invention of daemons. I then discussed how Pullman implicitly incorporates traits of the opposite sex into the characters through the description of the form-changing daemons. In part 3.6, I introduced the femme fatale archetype, examined the femme fatale

qualities in the character of Mrs Coulter, and analyzed how Pullman reinvents Mrs Coulter the femme fatale by making her a loving mother and a virtuous redeemer in the second part of the story. In part 3.7, I moved on and discussed a relatively minor female character – Ma Costa. Pullman, according to my research, inverted the gypsy female stereotype – the gypsy woman is now represented as a gentle, nurturing, mother-like figure in his trilogy.

In the next chapter, I will investigate how and why the Chinese translation of Pullman's *His Dark Materials* has brought about different interpretations of Lyra, the daemons, Mrs. Coulter and Ma Costa in the Chinese readership.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Manipulations and Alterations in the Chinese Version of *His Dark Materials*

Translations are inevitably partial...This *partiality* is not merely a defect, a lack, or an absence in a translation – it is also an aspect that makes the act of translation *partisan*: engaged and committed, either implicitly or explicitly.

Tymoczko (2000: 24)

#### 4.1. Introduction

Having discussed the various gender representations in Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000) in the previous chapter, I will now continue to examine how Pullman's trilogy is translated into Chinese – in the only Chinese version on the market. The goal of this chapter is to compare and see how Wang Jing, the Chinese translator handles the gender re-version and subversion suggested in the source text. With regards to Chinese gender ideology such as the concept of *yin-yang*, Buddhist notions of gender, the idea of the femme fatale (in the Chinese culture) and the stereotypical image of Chinese grannies, I will discuss the syntactic and semantic alterations or manipulations in the Chinese target text.

In section 4.2, I will first provide a brief introduction of the Chinese translator, Wang Jing, as well as the target text. Then, in sections 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5, I will look into how the translator's manipulations bring about new representations and/or interpretations of Lyra, the daemons and Mrs. Coulter in the Chinese version. I will demonstrate that the translator not only domesticates Pullman's work, but also fails to preserve the original flavour in the translation. The translator sacrifices the syntactic structure and idiomatic phrases in Pullman's source text to preserve fluency in Chinese. Chinese gender views / stereotypes are subtly blended in the Chinese version. In section 4.6 of this chapter, I will discuss how the translator standardizes the non-standard, colloquial language of Ma Costa, the mother-like Gypsy female in the target text. I will also talk about how such standardization of language brings about a new and different portrayal of Ma Costa in the Chinese text.

#### **4.2. A Brief Introduction to the Chinese Translator and the Translated Text**

The Chinese public came to know Pullman's *His Dark Materials* mainly through Chris Weitz's *Golden Compass* (2007), the Hollywood movie released by New Line Cinema, but as the fantasy epic gained more popularity, the Chinese text translated by Wang Jing also attracted the Chinese readers' attention. At present, Wang Jing's translation is the only Chinese version of Pullman's trilogy in the Chinese market. The translated texts of the three books were first issued in May 2002, June 2002 and July 2002 respectively.

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According to the information provided by Muses Sino Books, the Book Press in Taiwan, Wang has a BA in Chinese Language Studies (The Chinese Culture University, Taiwan) and an MA in European Studies (The University of London, U.K.). As a professional English-Chinese translator, Wang has translated a number of popular English books into Chinese, including Peter G. Peterson's *Gray Dawn: How the Coming Age Wave Will Transform America – and the World* (1999), Michael White's *Leonardo: The First Scientist* (2000), Frank Furedi's *Where Have All the Intellectuals Gone? Confronting 21<sup>st</sup> Century Philistinism* (2004), and John Dunn's *Setting the People Free: The Story of Democracy* (2005). Wang is also a children's book writer well loved by Taiwanese readers. The two Chinese children's novels, *世界毀滅之後* [*After the Apocalypse*] (2000) and *超級小偵探* [*The Little Super Detectives*] (2001) have brought Wang an Outstanding Award and a second place respectively in the Chiuko's Modern Children's Literature Award in Taiwan.

On reading the Chinese translation of Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, I would say that Wang has not only made the translated text comprehensible and enjoyable to the Chinese readers, but also made an effort to be loyal to the source text. Hardly any intentional deletion or alterations can be found at the level of the story plot. The translated text has satisfied the basic translation principles formulated by Yan Fu (1854 - 1921), the great translator and translation theorist in modern China:



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- Translation must be based on the source text and be faithful to both the original author and original work.
- The products of translating work must be comprehensible to the target language readers.
- The style of translation must be elegant. (Cited in Zhao, 2007: 167)

However, contrary to Lu Xun (1881 – 1936), the influential Chinese writer and a fervent supporter of strict literal translation, at the discourse level, Wang seems to have paid most attention to comprehensibility and elegance rather than faithfulness. Occasionally, culturally loaded words, phrases and expressions borrowed from the Chinese language are imported into the translated text for the sake of intelligibility, fluency, and the interest of the Chinese readers.

As a matter of fact, whether the translator sets faithfulness or fluency as the first priority, there will always be some alterations to the target text. After all, “no two languages are identical, either in the meaning given to corresponding symbols or in the ways in which such symbols are arranged” (Nida, 1964: 156). It is impossible to transfer everything from the source text to the target text. Perfect transmigration in style, grammar and semantic content, as Qian Zhong-shu noted, is just an ideal (Cited in Luo, 1984). While manipulations in translation are acceptable, we should ask, is the alteration unavoidable and necessary? If the answer is yes, then, when confronted with a word, a phrase, a sentence, a paragraph, and / or a kind of discourse that can by no means be faithfully translated technically, what does the translator do to achieve equivalence? If the answer is no, what is the reason for the deliberate distortion? As André Lefevere (1992) and Jiri

Levy (2000) have pointed out, the process of translation is not done in a vacuum. It is an important form of rewriting and a decision process influenced by certain linguistic, ideological and poetic factors. As a text begins to be interpreted and translated, its original ideology, values and norms will be shifted, diminished or lost, and new ideas might be added. To find out the gender ideology in the translated text, in this chapter, I will investigate the transformation in the Chinese translated text of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000). What the translator does to cater to the readers' linguistic and cultural needs will be my main concern here.

#### **4.3. An Altered Representation of Lyra in the Translated Text**

If Lyra is the new Eve in Pullman's trilogy, in the Chinese version, she may also be perceived as Nuwa reincarnate to the Chinese readers. Nuwa, the female creator of humans in Chinese mythology, is well-known in Chinese culture. Like Eve, Nuwa is the mother of all humans. The difference is that Nuwa is not created by God or from a rib of Adam. Instead, she is the one who created Heaven and Earth, made human beings from the yellow earth of China in the likeness of her own image. More surprisingly, Nuwa is not the mother of sin but she is like Eve and the serpent in one, for it is said that the upper part of her body is human-like, and the lower part of her body is like a snake or the tail of a dragon. Later on, Nuwa's serpentine qualities also came to be associated with the Yellow River during the Tang dynasty (A.D. 618 – 907). It is said that from a distance, the Yellow River that gives life and nurtures the people in China looks like a yellow

serpent that stretches her body in the mainland. The Yellow River is considered a symbol of Nuwa the goddess.

The portrayal of goddess Nuwa can be read as a celebration of fertility, Mother Nature and motherhood. Unfortunately, the power and independence of Nuwa were lessened with the rise of Confucianism in Chinese society. As scholars have observed, gradually, Nuwa “no longer functioned as an independent deity, but was required to submit to the will of the supreme male god, Taizu” (Kucera, 2007: 55). The ideology of women being wise, powerful and self-sufficient had diminished in traditional Chinese culture since the Zhou dynasty (1111 – 249 B.C.). Before the Zhou dynasty, ancient Chinese philosophers observed the natural dualities in the environment and developed the yin-yang theory. It was believed that the Supreme Ultimate (*tai ji* 太極) emits the two exemplars (*liang yi* 兩儀), and the two exemplars emit two opposing natural forces in the world. On the one hand, the *yang* force (陽) represents energetic qualities. It is associated with heat, brightness, activity, excitement, stimulation, movement, upward and outward directions, etc. The *yin* force (陰), on the other hand, represents the opposite, which is associated with cold, darkness, rest, condensation, inhibition, nourishment, downward and inward directions, etc. Parallels are also drawn between the cosmological thinking of yin-yang and human orders, with male being *yang*, female being *yin*. According to *Chunqiu fanlu* [Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn], a philosophical work that is believed to be “the orthodox doctrine of state” (Loewe, 1993) in 134 B.C.,

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The yin and yang of heaven and earth correspond to male and female. In the human realm, male and female correspond to yin and yang. Indeed, it is by being yin and yang that male and female are called [such]; and it is by being male or female that [things are] called yin and yang (1984: 415).

At the beginning, the *yin* force was perceived as equal and complementary to the *yang* force. As Raphals (1998) notes, “yin-yang polarities are mostly cyclic and relatively nonhierarchical” (142). They alter and transform. However, when it comes to the late Zhou dynasty, the *yin* force was gradually stigmatized as inferior (Wu, 1995). It was stressed then that male, the embodiment of *yang*, was superior to female, as *yin*. As recorded in the “Domestic Rules” of *The Record of the Rites*, the male should take the action while the female should follow him; the male should take care of the outer affairs and the female should manage the household well. It was believed that “female submissiveness was the main factor needed for domestic harmony” (ibid). The concept of male supremacy and female subordination was further consolidated in the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. – 220 A.D.) as Confucian scholars “associated the *yang* force with good, and regarded the *yin* as prone to evil and in need of *yang*’s control” (ibid). As Guisso notes,

[a]ll women possess a nature which is predominantly yin and unless they are regulated by the yang qualities of the male[,] the all-important harmony of family and cosmos will be upset (1981: 53).

To prevent the harmony of family and cosmos from being ‘upset’, rules of conducts and regulations of sexual segregation were written in detail in *The Five Classics*. For instance, as a creature in need of discipline, women should conform to the rituals of three obediences. This means that before marriage, a woman should obey her father; after

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marriage, she is to obey her husband; finally, after the death of her husband, she should obey her son, should she have any. An unrestrained woman is considered destructive and dangerous. This prejudice against women is reflected in the chapter of *Chan-han* in *The Five Classics* of the Confucian tradition,

A clever man builds a city wall;  
A clever woman overthrows it;  
Beautiful is the clever woman,  
But she is an owl, a hooting owl;  
A woman with a long tongue,  
She is a promoter of evil;  
Disorder is not sent down from Heaven,  
It is produced by women;  
Those who cannot be instructed or taught  
Are women and eunuchs. (Cited in Guisso, 1981: 55)

Hilarious as it may seem, to this day, the Confucian teaching about gender is still popular and influential in China. For example, in the Chinese language, ‘Hell’ is called 陰間 (The Land of *Yin*); 陽間 (The Land of *Yang*), on the other hand, is the land of all living things. Similarly, according to Chinese *Feng Shui*, places that are dark, quiet, cold and wet are called ‘*yin* places’. Ghosts and demons love to stay there, and humans who live there will have bad luck. Also, people who were born in the *yin* hour, *yin* month and *yin* year are unlucky. Not only will they bring bad luck to people around them, they may also have unpleasant, ghostly encounters many times in their lives. More disappointingly, despite the advancement in economy, life quality and education, the common Confucian saying, “A woman who lacks talent is virtuous” (女子無才便是德) still has a powerful effect in China. This can be reflected in the degrading Chinese slang, ‘Female PhD’ (女博士),

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which is used by both men and women in China. The Chinese term ‘female PhD’ refers to a woman who has been educated to high standard, and maybe single, old, unkempt, desperate, and without a male partner. To Chinese men, a ‘female PhD’ is undesirable for three reasons. Firstly, her qualifications are a threat to men. Secondly, it is assumed that she is sexually unattractive and boring because she only spends time on her studies and research. Thirdly, it is believed that a woman who has a PhD degree is not considered as young anymore. Female PhDs are said to belong to the derogatory ‘third sex’.

Brought up with and influenced by the Confucian view of gender, Chinese readers, including the translator, may find Pullman’s Lyra subversive and outrageous. The wild and spirit-free nature of Lyra is just too different from that of the conventional ‘virtuous’ Chinese women. More interestingly, because the idea of new Eve echoes well with that of Nuwa, the half woman, half snake Chinese deity, it would not be surprising if Lyra is perceived as a hope or a symbol of liberation for the female in the eyes of Chinese readers. To a certain extent, the assertive qualities in the character of Lyra may even be amplified and exaggerated in the Chinese translation.

I will now demonstrate how the translator alters the descriptions of Lyra to make the female protagonist more heroic, though this may not be the case for other female characters in the series.

#### 4.3.1. *Yang* Features Exaggerated in the Portrayal of Lyra

In *Northern Lights* (1995), Lyra is introduced to the readers as “in many ways...a barbarian” (35) and a “coarse and greedy little savage” (37). Far from being “perfectly behaved, sweet, charming, innocent, attentive, delightful” (88), Lyra is “dirty” (38), “stubborn” (53), “sly” and “insincere” (54). Represented like a boy in stereotypical children’s books, she would clamber over roofs, play in the crypt, wage wars with street children, steal apples from the market, and even “spit plum-stones on the heads of passing Scholars” (36). Lyra’s mother, Mrs Coulter describes her as “coarse and vulgar” (88). This vivid and subversive image of Lyra encourages the Chinese translator to add yang features to the description of the protagonist. Setting the faithfulness to the original text aside, Lyra is made to become even more active, wild, assertive and subversive in the Chinese version.

In chapter three of *Northern Lights* (1995), Pullman compares Lyra to “a half-wild cat” (37). In the target text, however, the translation says more than the source text. Rather than just being half-wild, Lyra is said to be “like a self-indulgent wild cat”<sup>1</sup> (像隻放任的野貓) (Translated by Wang, 2002: 61). The adjective ‘self-indulgent’ is added, whereas ‘half’ is intentionally omitted from the original expression. The unnecessary addition and elimination make Lyra look more boyish in the Chinese text. The *yang* features in the

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<sup>1</sup> All English-Chinese translations hereafter, unless noted, are my translation.

character are exaggerated. Similarly, in chapter four of *Northern Lights* (1995), the “half-wild life” (67) of Lyra is translated differently as 野氣未脫的生活方式 (Translated by Wang, 2002: 100). Translated back into English, it means “a life-style which the primitive nature is still not dismissed”. In my view, Wang’s translation is unfaithful to the source text, for it implies that Lyra is a naturally born rebel. It is assumed that her barbarous behaviour is innate and cannot be obliterated, despite the schooling and training in Oxford.

Also, in chapter seven of *Northern Lights* (1995), the translator over-translates Pullman’s description of Lyra. On page 120, Pullman writes, “She looked fierce and stubborn as she sat there, small against the high carved back of the chair. The two old men couldn’t help smiling” (1995: 120). The contrast between Lyra’s serious look and her petite frame is supposed to be funny. In the translated text, however, the translator uses a Chinese idiom 義憤填膺 (Translated by Wang, 2002: 166) to substitute the adjective “fierce”. Translated literally, the Chinese idiom means “the rage towards injustice fills one’s chest”. It refers to the intolerance and wrath against injustice and inequality. The use of such a solemn Chinese idiom has not only spoiled the contrast. It also says something about Lyra’s character, for it implies that Lyra is not just a little girl who only plays at home, but a person who cares about social issues too. The heroic *yang* feature in Lyra is once again made explicit with the subtle change in wording, but not a direct change in the story plot.



Another interesting alteration can be found in chapter 17 of *Northern Lights* (1995). In the source text, it is said that in order to help the children escape from the Gobblers' experimental station in Bolvangar, "Lyra encouraged, bullied, hit, half-carried, swore at, pushed, dragged, lifted tenderly, wherever it was needed" (1995: 296). In the source text, there is no indication that Lyra knows kung-fu or any kind of martial arts. Yet, in the Chinese text, the line "wherever it was needed" in the source text is rewritten to become "萊拉使出渾身解數" (Translated by Wang, 2002: 373). In English, the expression means "Lyra shows all her *jie-su* (解數)", and *jie-su* is a typical term associated with the fighting methods and strategic moves in kung-fu fighting. Spin kick and side punch, for example, are *jie-su*. Although the term *jie-su* is only meant to be a figurative expression in the Chinese text, it makes the protagonist Lyra look masculine, powerful, and full of *yang* energy. There is no apparent reason to justify why such an expression should be added to the translation. The translator could have easily translated the line "wherever it was needed" (1995: 296) into Chinese without making much change to the original text.

A similar kind of intentional additions can also be observed in the Chinese version of *The Subtle Knife* (1997). In chapter 9, Mrs Coulter agrees with Sir Charles that Lyra "doesn't lack nerve" (212). A person who "doesn't lack nerve" is someone who is brave and courageous, especially when facing adverse conditions. Yet, in the Chinese text, the expression is not only not accurately translated, but also re-written with a Chinese idiom, "她本來就膽大包天" (Translated by Wang, 2002: 267). Translated literally into English,

the new expression goes like this, “she is by nature *daring enough to cover up the sky* (膽大包天)”. The Chinese idiom “daring enough to cover the sky” means much more than just bravery and courage. In the Chinese culture, ‘the sky’ means heaven, the Almighty and the king. To the Chinese, ‘the sky’ is really the limit. Therefore, we can predict how daring, rebellious, ambitious and outrageous a person must be if s/he would go so far as to challenge the greatness of the sky, go beyond it and ‘cover’ it. Although the idiom fits well with the anti-god theme of Pullman’s work, it also fills the character Lyra with aggressive *yang* force, which is not a faithful translation of the source text.

Intriguingly, apart from over-translation, the translator also seems to have the inclination to invert the meaning of the source text. Adverbs can be twisted to mean the opposite for the sake of ‘creating’ a Lyra with apparent *yang* qualities in the Chinese text. In chapter 13 of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), for instance, manipulation can be found in a sentence as short and simple as “Lyra said virtuously” (272). In the Chinese version, the translator uses the idiom “自以爲是” (2002: 338) to replace “virtuously” (1997: 272). Translated literally back into English, “自以爲是” refers to someone who is too confident and sure of his/her intuition. Others can see the person as having a biased judgement. Yet, because the person lacks *yin* qualities such as serenity, modesty, humbleness and submissiveness, s/he would not have the peace of mind to listen to others’ advice. In brief, the Chinese idiom and the adjective “virtuously” (1997: 272) have very different connotations, if not opposite ones. The Chinese translation is unfaithful to the source text.

At the expense of being loyal to the source text, the translator tries to add *yang* qualities to Lyra in the Chinese text. The manipulation at the discourse level explicitates the subversive features of Lyra. Having said so, the translator is not sensitive to the anti-patriarchal message submerged in Pullman's text. In the following, I will point out the translator's failure in capturing the anti-patriarchal notions in Pullman's description of Lyra.

#### **4.3.2. Anti-patriarchal Notions Softened in the Portrayal of Lyra**

Not infrequently, passages written specifically with an anti-patriarchal tone are translated with less strength. In chapter 5 of *Northern Lights* (1995), Pullman describes how Lyra is trained and forced to become a lady of high society. Her feeling of distress and discomfort towards the suppression of natural gender expression as well as the sex-role stereotyping is written in detail. The following is an account of the hypocritical, feminine appearance of Mrs. Coulter's lady friends, as well as how Lyra is made to fit in the social norm among the ladies:

...women so unlike female scholars or gyptian boat-mothers or college servants as almost to be **a new sex** altogether...Lyra would be dressed up prettily for these occasions, and the ladies would pamper her and include her in their graceful delicate talk, which was all about people: this artist, or that politician, or those lovers (82).

The helplessness and submissiveness suffered by Lyra is made apparent as Pullman tells the reader that Lyra 'is dressed up' for occasions, meaning she does not have the freedom

to choose the clothes she would like to wear. Also, in the group, instead of saying what she would like to say, or initiating discussion topics that she is interested in, she interacts with others only when she is ‘included’ in the “delicate talk” (82), which is all gossip that revolves around people. To highlight the artificiality and hypocrisy of the so-called lady-like behaviour, Pullman writes that they are like ‘a new sex’ when compared to ordinary women.

In the Chinese version, however, these notions have been weakened, if not totally lost. Firstly, “Lyra would be dressed up prettily...” is translated as 萊拉會打扮得漂漂亮亮 (2002: 118). Translated back in English, it becomes “Lyra would dress up prettily”, The passive voice in the source text is changed into active voice in the translated text. The translator makes it sound as if Lyra has the agency to choose whether to dress herself up. Secondly, “the ladies would include her in their graceful delicate talk, which was all about people” is translated as 其他女士...和她聊些優雅、精緻的話題，談話內容圍繞在某個藝術家或政治家的韻事 (ibid). The back translation is, “other ladies will have graceful delicate talks with her. The content of the talks are revolved around fun issues of a certain artist or politician”. The Chinese version seems to suggest that Lyra has an equal relationship with other ladies. She is not just begging to be ‘included’. She could also initiate talks among the ladies. The text does not mention either that the talks are all gossip about people. The subtle negative tone in the source text is omitted. In the Chinese

version, the expression that these ladies are “a new sex” is merely translated as 天壤之別 (ibid), which means ‘extremely different’. The focus on gender identity is lost.

In a short passage of just seven lines, a series of omissions and alterations occur in the target text, softening the anti-patriarchal notions suggested in the source text. Readers of the Chinese version may find Mrs. Coulter’s lady friends less distressing. Perhaps some might even wonder why Lyra dislikes socializing with the elegant ladies so much. One possible reason for the omissions could be that in Chinese culture, ‘ladies’ are normally translated as 淑女 (*su-nu*), a noun originating from a Chinese classic called *Shi Jing* (*The Book of Songs*, written in approximately 1000 B.C.), which bears a similar meaning to the idea of ‘ladies’ in English. However, the notion of ‘su-nu’ is rarely associated with negative connotations such as restrictive manners, hypocrisy and the suppression of women. Rather, ‘su-nu’ has more to do with the modesty, gentleness, fidelity and beauty of women. In this light, it is imaginable that when the Chinese translator comes across the word ‘ladies’ in Pullman’s work, she may not be sensitive enough to detect the underlying associations with class, social status, sex-role stereotyping, power relations and even hypocrisy, which are all highlights in Pullman’s text.

After discussing the borrowing of yang features as well as the negligence of anti-patriarchal notions in the representation of Lyra, in section 4.4, I will move on and look at

another interesting issue in the Chinese translation – the manifestation of Guan Yin, the Genderless Buddha of Compassion in the portrayal of daemons.

#### **4.4. The Manifestation of Buddhist Notion of Gender in Daemons**

From a feminist perspective, one remarkable feature of Pullman's daemons is that the appearance of children's daemons changes, while adults' daemons remain only in one animal form. The different animal forms manifested by children's daemons can be read as the multiple, fluid expressions of self expressed by children. When the daemon gradually stops changing and remains in one form, it indicates that the person may have been fixated in one of the identity expressions which has solidified in the unchanging appearance of his/her daemon. The fluid form of children's daemons is very interesting in Wang's translation of Pullman's books. In the Chinese version, the translator implicitly engages in blending the idea of form transformation and genderlessness of Guan Yin, the Buddha of Compassion (Li, 2001) who is well-known for the supernatural power of taking on any gender and form to express Buddhist faith (Xing, 1999).

This section will examine therefore, these notions of genderlessness and formlessness of Guan Yin which are fused into the Chinese translated text of Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000).

I will start by introducing Buddhist notions of gender. Then, I shall focus on the genderlessness and formlessness of Guan Yin, with regard to Buddha's fluid form transformations. Then, I will examine the representations of Pullman's daemons in the Chinese translation of *His Dark Materials*. The translation strategies that Wang uses to introduce Guan Yin's genderlessness will also be analyzed and discussed.

#### **4.4.1. Buddhist Notions of Gender**

Buddhism today is well-known for its humanistic elements such as tolerance and equality. However, the notion of equality between men and women developed only when the religion entered the Chinese culture (Xu and Huang, 2006). According to Shi (2005), early Buddhist scriptures are not only full of negative associations of women, but they also present misogynist sentiments. Women's status used to be so low that they were often compared to inferior forms of life such as beasts and demons. In 'the Tale of King Udayana of Vatsa' in *Maharatnakuta Sutra*, it is stated that:

Women can ruin the precepts of purity. They can also ignore honor and virtue...As the filth and decay of a dead dog or dead snake are burned away, so all men should burn filth and detest evil. The dead snake and dog are detestable, but women are even more detestable than they are (Paul (trans.), 1979: 27 – 50; Sponberg, 1992: 21).

According to Buddhist gender ideology, because of their sins and impurity, women were not qualified to become a Buddha, and men who want to become a Buddha should avoid

contact with women. In *The Cullavagga*, women are described as ‘cunning, tricky thieves [women are], stay with them and you can’t see the truth).’ (取巧多智的賊，和她們同在一塊兒，真理就很難找得着) (Li, 2001: 311). Similarly, in *The Law Code of Manu* (1871 - 1941), the most authoritative and the best-known legal text of ancient Indians, men are warned of the evil nature of women:

Seducing men and leading them to the fall are the nature of women...on earth, women can tempt not only the foolish ones, but also gentlemen to stray away from the right path, making them become the slaves of love and flesh.

誘使男子墮落是婦女的天性，.....因爲在人世間，婦女不但可以使愚者，而且也可以使賢者悖離正道，使之成爲愛情和肉欲的俘虜 (1980: 50)。

It was believed that women, trapped by their evil nature, are not capable of reaching the state of Nirvana. To reach Nirvana and become a Buddhist, a woman must work hard and do good deeds in her life. Then, in her next life, she will have a chance of becoming a man, who can then follow the right path and start his journey to Nirvana (Shi, 2005: 156).

#### **4.4.2. Guan Yin, the Genderless Buddha of Compassion**

The biased view in Buddhist belief changed as changes in the representations of Guan Yin took place. Xing (1999) points out that the *Avatamsaka Sutra* of the Huayan School portrayed Guan Yin as ‘a brave, courageous man’ (勇猛丈夫) in the second century B.C. As Buddhism became popular with Chinese believers in the eighth to tenth centuries B.C.



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Guan Yin almost always appears in the form of a charming lady. What is interesting is that Guan Yin may look like a female, but is in fact ‘非男非女’ (neither male nor female), and at the same time, ‘亦男亦女’ (both male and female) (Jiang, 2006: 247). This Buddhist prophet is believed to have the wisdom of seeing through the superficial surface of gender and form. Freed from restrictions of gender, Guan Yin can take on any gender and form to save beings from suffering and ignorance. The following is a description of the formlessness of Guan Yin by Li Ao (2001), a renowned Chinese writer and scholar from Taiwan:

Guan Yin has no form of his / her own. Guan Yin has to be manifested in the corporeal forms of everything and everybody. Hence, Guan Yin is not male or female. Guan Yin is also both male and female. Guan Yin can be male or female. When he wants to become a man, he's a man. When she wants to become a woman, she's a woman. Besides having the ability to transform interchangeably as a male or a female anytime, anyplace, Guan Yin can also take the form of birds, animals and beings of any kind, including the form of a green dragon, a white tiger, even you and me (My translation).

觀音是無形的，他要靠「現眾身」-- 在大眾身上顯現 – 來表示自己。所以不男不女、亦男亦女、可男可女、要男就男、要女就女。不但如此男女自如、雌雄隨意，他還可以化爲飛禽走獸、化爲青龍白虎、化爲你和我。(2001, p.97)

What is remarkable is that unlike the incorporeal Holy Spirit in common Christian belief, Guan Yin's fluid forms are corporeal and tangible. This feature is clearly demonstrated in the legend of ‘Guan Yin with the fish basket’ in the Tang Dynasty, where it is said that Guan Yin transforms himself to become a beautiful maiden who sold fish in the

countryside. Guan Yin has become the object of sexual desire in the story. Moreover, special attention is paid to the early death of the maiden, her corpse and its subsequent miraculous transformation. As translated by Bagyalakshimi, an Indian scholar (1998),

Just as the marriage ceremony was to commence the girl took ill and died. Soon after the burial an old priest visited Ma Lang and requested him to dig up the grave. The coffin contained only pieces of golden bones. The old priest said that the girl was a manifestation of Guanyin who had come to lead people to salvation. After saying this the old man too vanished. From then on the people of the district became Guanyin devotees (1998: 219).

On the one hand, the corporeal state of Guan Yin is given a lot of importance. On the other hand, it is very impressive that Guan Yin, with a body of flesh and bone, can rise above the corporeal level. Through Guan Yin, the body, its form (and gender) are understood as emptiness. Buddhist believers are expected to try the best they can to understand how to see beyond form (including gender) and perceive the body as ever-changing, so that they can be free from stubbornness, and finally overcome all suffering and calamity.

#### **4.4.3. Inherent ‘Guan Yin’ Nature in Pullman’s *Daemons* Magnified**

On reading the one and only Chinese version of Pullman’s *His Dark Materials*, I find that hardly any alterations are visible in terms of the plot and characters. Ideological alterations mostly exist subtly on the level of discourse. Having said so, implicitly, the translator engages in importing Guan Yin’s notions of genderlessness into the translated

text when descriptions of daemons occur. In the following, I will examine how the Chinese translator manipulates the source text to make it carry Buddhist gender notions as manifested in Guan Yin.

In Pullman's *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000), there are several parallel universes co-existing. In the world of Lyra the female protagonist, all humans possess a body, a daemon/soul, a ghost and a death angel that follows them around. While the body is capable of sensing the world around it, the daemon/soul is the part capable of loving the world around it. The ghost, on the other hand, is for learning about the world. When a person dies, his/her daemon fades away, whereas his/her ghost lives on, and the death angel will lead the ghost to the underworld. While the idea of personal daemons is derived from Greek and Roman philosophy (Levison, 1995), a similar saying about humans can be found in Chinese culture. As Xu, a scholar who studies Chinese mythology and philosophy recounts (2005):

Humans consist of three kinds of yun [ghosts] and seven types of pa [spirits], together with the body, a being with wisdom and life is formed...the seven types of pa are happiness, anger, sadness, fear, love, hatred and desires. Yun [ghost] is metaphysical in nature but pa [spirit] belongs to the physical world. Hence, when a person dies, his / her three ghosts continue their way [to heaven, underworld and the grave], but his / her seven spirits follow the flesh and dissipate.

人類本來就有三魂七魄形成一個有智慧活動的肉體...七魄有：喜、怒、哀、懼、愛、惡、慾。三魂在於精神中；七魄在於物質。所以人身去世，三魂歸三線路，七魄歸肉體消失。(p.79)

Comparing Pullman's inventions with the traditional Chinese myth, the similarity between 'ghost' and *yun*, as well as 'daemon' and *pa* becomes apparent. The Chinese translator may well borrow the equivalent terms *yun* (魂) and *pa* (魄) when translating the terms 'ghost' and 'daemon' respectively. However, in the translated text, only *yun* (魂) is used for 'ghost'. *Pa* (魄) is discarded and a new term 守護精靈 (guardian creature) is invented for 'daemon' instead. The question at issue is: why does the translator use 守護精靈 (guardian creature), a term that does not originate in the source text? Gouanvic suggests the idea of habitus, or a set of socially constructed, acquired patterns of thought, behaviour and taste,

If a translator imposes a rhythm upon the text, a lexicon or a syntax that does not originate in the source text and thus substitutes his or her voice for that of the author, this is essentially not a conscious strategic choice but an effect of his or her specific habitus, as acquired in the target literary field (2005: 158).

Judging from a single example, it is hard to say whether the variation in the translated text is due to the effect of the translator's specific habitus. Nonetheless, the translation of daemons as 守護精靈 (guardian creature) instead of *pa* (魄) has, in Gouanvic's words, 'imposed a rhythm upon the lexicon'. Semantically, there are two differences between 守護精靈 (guardian creature) and *pa* (魄): firstly, there is the idea of 'guardian' added 守護精靈 (guardian creature). Secondly, compared to *pa* (魄), which refers to the seven spirits,

the lexicon ‘精靈’(creature) has less to do with the spiritual but more with a solid, corporeal body of flesh and bones.

Whether it is a ‘conscious strategic choice’ of the translator, both the addition of the idea of ‘guardian’ and the use of the more corporeal term ‘精靈’ (creature) has the effect of emphasizing the ‘Guan Yin’ nature in the daemons. In the ST, daemons play different roles, such as parent, friend, pet, and protector at different times. The role of being a protector is only one of many. However, in the TT, with the addition of ‘guardian’, it is made explicit to the Chinese readers that the role of daemons, like that of Guan Yin, is to protect humans from harm and danger. The role of being a protector is emphasized. As for the use of the more corporeal term ‘精靈’ (creature) instead of *pa* (魄), the translator prevents the readers from associating daemons with intangible spirits or emotions, as *pa* (魄) suggests. Using 守護精靈 (guardian creature) instead can help readers to perceive daemons as living beings with thoughts, mind, and a physical body. The form and shape changing of daemons, in this sense, is understood to be the same as that of Guan Yin, where dramatic, obvious changes happen to the creature’s body and its physical appearance.

#### **4.4.4. Genderlessness of Guan Yin Enhanced in the Translated Text**

Besides magnifying the inherent ‘Guan Yin’ nature in Pullman’s daemons, the Chinese translator has also added in elements that do not belong to the daemons in the source text. Comparing Guan Yin with the daemons, it is not difficult to notice that daemons are not exactly the same as Guan Yin the Buddhist prophet. First of all, daemons’ formlessness is subject to more constraints when compared to that of Guan Yin. While Guan Yin can take the form of a human or an animal, daemons can only take the form of an animal. In addition, when a person grows into an adult, the animal form of the daemon will be fixed forever. Secondly, while Guan Yin does not have a fixed sex or gender identity, the sex of daemons in Pullman’s work is fixed. They are either male or female, and they are almost always the opposite sex to the human. For instance, Pantalaimon (Pan), Lyra’s daemon, is male. No matter how many different forms it takes on, it always remains male. In the source text of the trilogy, Pullman uses pronouns such as ‘he’, ‘him’ and ‘his’ to refer to Pan. Similarly, the male protagonist’s daemon, Kirjava, is female. Pronouns like ‘she’, ‘her’ and ‘hers’ are used in the source text to refer to this daemon.

#### **4.4.5. Genderlessness Imported Through Inconsistent Translation of the Pronoun ‘It’**

Interestingly, in the Chinese version, the translator does not always use gender-specific pronouns such as ‘he’, ‘him’, ‘she’, ‘her’, etc to refer to daemons. Although on the whole,

the Chinese translator is loyal to the source text, there are unnecessary alterations in the use of pronouns. Before analyzing the inconsistent use of pronouns in the target text, we can briefly look at the features of the five different third person singular pronouns that commonly occur in the Chinese language:

- 祂 : Similar to ‘it’, gender-neutral, refers to a celestial / divine being only
- 他 : Equivalent to ‘he’, refers to male only
- 她 : Equivalent to ‘she’, refers to female only
- 牠 : Similar to ‘it’, gender-neutral, refers to an animal or a beast only
- 它 : Similar to ‘it’, gender-neutral, refers to non-living object only

The translator uses different pronouns like 他 (He), 它 (‘It’ that refers to lifeless objects; gender unspecified) and 牠 (‘It’ that refers to animals; gender unspecified), which suggest different gender identities and life forms, to refer to the same daemon. In such cases, the Chinese translator makes use of the sophisticated system of third person singular pronouns in the Chinese language. Skillfully and subtly, daemons in the target text are provided with a further freedom of formlessness and genderlessness similar to that of Guan Yin, which is different from that suggested in the source text. The following is an example that illustrates this point – in chapter one of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), the pronoun ‘it’ is used to refer to Pan:

**It** leapt into her arms, and when **it** got there, **it** had changed shape. Now **it** was a red-brown stoat with a cream throat and belly, and **it** glared at him as ferociously as the girl herself (p.21. My emphasis).

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It is understandable why Pullman chooses to use ‘it’ instead of ‘he’ to refer to Pan in this case. The narrative suggests that Will sees Pan, a daemon for the first time in his life. In Will’s eyes, Pan is an animal and he cannot tell whether it is male or female. In the Chinese version, the translator faithfully translates ‘it’ as 牠, a gender-neutral pronoun that refers to animals only:

It jumped into her arms and changed its shape immediately. Now **it** was a red-brown stoat with a cream throat and belly. **It** stared at him ferociously, just as the girl stared at him.

牠跳入她懷裡，迅速變換形狀。現在牠是隻紅棕色的鼬，有著奶油色的喉嚨和肚皮，牠兇狠注視他的模樣，和女孩如出一轍。(Wang (trans.), 2002: 37. My emphasis)

The pronoun 牠 can no doubt be viewed as an equivalent term for ‘it’, the gender-neutral pronoun. However, a few pages later, the ‘it’ pronoun in the source text is translated as yet another Chinese pronoun. In the source text, Lyra says, ‘Your daemon en’t separate from you. **It’s** you. A part of you.’ (1997: 26. My emphasis). In the translated text, it is translated as ‘你的精靈並非和你分開。它就是你，是你的一部分。’ (Wang (trans.) 2002: 43. My emphasis) Here, the Chinese pronoun becomes 它, which can only be used to describe non-living objects. The daemons are not only referred to as genderless, they are also represented as lifeless. At this point, a Chinese reader might wonder: why is the daemon sometimes an animal and sometimes an object? What is the gender of the daemon? The inconsistent use of pronouns causes confusion. There is even more



confusion when the translator uses the pronoun ‘he’ (他) to refer to the daemon later on in the passage, ‘**He** has already noticed...’ (‘**他**已經注意到...’) (Wang Jing (trans.), 2002: 83. My emphasis). The inconsistent translation of the pronoun ‘it’ provides the daemon with more room for form transformation. Instead of being a male animal, Pan is represented sometimes as a non-living object, sometimes an animal with no specific gender, and sometimes a male.

#### 4.4.6. Gender ‘Hidden’ Through Ellipsis of Pronouns

What is also interesting in chapter one of *The Subtle Knife* (1997) is that Wang Jing, the Chinese translator, seems to have the inclination to avoid and delay telling the readers explicitly the true gender of Pan. In the source text, as Will comes to realize that Pan is a daemon with the opposite sex of Lyra, the narrative gradually employs pronouns such as ‘he’, ‘his’ and ‘him’ to refer to Pan, replacing the gender-neutral ‘it’. For example, on page 23 of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), ‘Her daemon had changed again, and become a huge brightly-coloured butterfly...The butterfly raised and lowered **his** wings slowly’ (My emphasis). Similarly, on page 24, ‘Her daemon, a cat again, was dipping **his** paw in it too, but **he** backed away when Will came near’ (My emphasis). Yet, in the translated text, Pan remains genderless for a much longer period of time. Most of the masculine pronouns used to refer to Pan are avoided. This is done either by using ellipsis, or by insisting on the use of 牠, the gender-neutral pronoun that refers only to animals. On page 39 of the

translated text, the translator uses ellipsis to keep the daemon's gender hidden – 'The butterfly raised and lowered his wings' (1997: 23) in the source text becomes “蝴蝶緩緩舉翅又落下” (Wang (trans.) 2002: 39), where the literal translation is 'The butterfly slowly raised [ellipsis] wings and then lowered them'. In the source text, Pullman writes:

Her daemon, a cat again, was dipping **his** paw in it too, but **he** backed away when Will came near (1997: 24)

In the target text, by contrast, the line is translated as:

她的精靈此時又變回了貓，也將掌子伸入碗內，但威爾一靠近，牠就立刻退後。(Translated by Wang, 2002: 40. My emphasis)

The literal translation of Wang's Chinese translation is, 'Her daemon changed back to a cat, dipped [ellipsis] paw into the bowl, but when Will came near, **it** (the gender-neutral pronoun for animals) backed away'. As shown in the examples given above, the translator refuses to mention and reveal Pan's gender repeatedly. At the risk of being considered unfaithful to the source text, the translator stretches the language and style presented in the translated text and keeps the gender-free notion as much as it can be.

#### **4.4.7. Daemons' Form-fixing Interpreted and Translated as a Lamentable Loss**

Besides magnifying and importing Guan Yin's genderlessness and formlessness in the daemons, the translator also seems to pay special attention when Lyra's and Will's

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daemons settled into a fixed form and lose their power of form changing. In the last book of Pullman's trilogy, *Lyra and Will*, the two main characters touch each other's daemon lovingly and intimately with their bare hands. The ecstatic feelings experienced by the boy and the girl are written in detail. At about the same time, the readers are told that the forms of the daemons of both Lyra and Will will not change anymore:

And she knew too that neither daemon would change now, having felt a lover's hand on them. These were their shapes for life: they would want no other (2000: 528).

The moment of intimate physical liaison, together with the form fixation of the children's daemons, can be seen as a symbol of maturity and self-identity. It is also a farewell to childhood and the fluidity of forms, a rare quality owned only by children's daemons. On the loss of the daemons' free forms, Lyra realizes that it is a loss but she accepts Pan's fixed form as a pine-marten:

“It's funny,” she said, “you remember when we were younger and I didn't want you to stop changing at all...Well, I wouldn't mind so much now. Not if you stay like this.” (2000: 527).

Pullman also asserts that neither Lyra, Will, nor their daemons would need or want the freedom and ability to change their daemons' forms anymore, ‘they would want no other’ (2000: 528). In a sense, childhood, innocence, and the changing forms of daemons are represented as a phase which will have to be relinquished in life. In the Chinese version, the sadness of the loss of fluidity in the daemons' forms is exaggerated. The expression

‘neither daemon would change now’ is translated as 他們的精靈再也無法改變了 (Wang (trans.) 2002: 577), which, when translated back into English, means ‘their daemons can no longer change by any means’. This translation implies that the inability to change forms is not just a turn in life, but an undesirable, yet unavoidable consequence of coming of age, if not a punishment. Also, while ‘they would want no other’ (2000: 528) reflects a serene, peaceful state of mind, in the Chinese version, it becomes 他們也不要別的模樣 (Wang (trans.) 2002: 577), which bears the meaning of ‘they refuse to take on other forms’. In the source text, the word ‘want’ can be read as a lack, desire or need. ‘Want no other’, in this light, is a bliss because it means nothing is missing. However, in the translated text, the line ‘they refuse to take on other forms’ shows a hint of stubbornness, antagonism and resistance.

Such interesting alterations can be explained if we look at how the ability to change one’s form is normally perceived in Chinese and Buddhist thinking. According to the Buddhist belief, there are numerous realms in the universe. Humans and all living beings on Earth belong to the Realm of Desire. Above the physical realm, there exists the Realm of Form, where beings have outward appearances but no desires. Then, above the Realm of Form, there is also the Realm of Formlessness, the highest of all realms (Sadakata, 1997). Celestial beings such as Guan Yin belonging to this realm are said to be free from the limitations of the senses and the physical realm. They have no forms or desires. Formlessness, in this light, is superior to having a fixed form. One of the most important

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texts in Buddhism, *The Great Heart Sutra* says that: 「舍利子，色不異空，空不異色，色即是空，空即是色，受想行識亦復如是。」 In English, this means:

Sariputra, form is no different from emptiness; emptiness is no different from form. Form is emptiness; emptiness is form. Feeling, thought, activity, consciousness are also thus (Wong (trans.) 2002: 323 – 324).

Simply put, forms such as gender are not ordained by nature. They can be changed according to your will, if only you have the wisdom and allow the changes to occur. Meanwhile, the freedom to escape from the constraints of the senses, form and shape is recognized as a divine gift. It is one step closer to Nirvana, a condition or place where the being is free from the endless cycle of reincarnation and suffering. By contrast, losing such a freedom would be like taking a step down. Due to the similarity between the form-changing of daemons and the formlessness of Guan Yin, the notion of free self-expression and performativity is perceived in a positive light and happily embraced by Chinese readers. Thus, it is understandable why the Chinese translator uses a lamenting tone when the children's daemons are 'stuck' in one form.

To conclude, in this section, I have illustrated that in the Chinese translation of Pullman's trilogy, the notion of gender performativity is not only well-preserved, but also made explicit when the translator blends in Buddhist ideas of gender. The 'genderlessness' and formlessness of the Buddhist prophet, Guan Yin are borrowed to enhance the notion of gender performativity in the source text. Through translation strategies such as the

creative translation of pronouns, the ellipsis of pronouns, and the addition of a lamenting tone over the settled form of daemons, Buddhist views of gender are added and introduced to create a fusion effect in the target text.

Having compared the representations of Lyra and her daemon between the source text and the target text, in the next section, I will move on to analyse the representation of another female character – Mrs Coulter, the femme fatale. To begin with, I will first discuss the femme fatale stereotype in Chinese culture.

#### **4.5. The Interpretation of the ‘Femme Fatale’ in the Chinese Version**

As I have mentioned in chapter three, the term ‘femme fatale’ refers to archetypal female characters who refuse to play the “ideologically acceptable female roles” (Wager, 1999: 15). Dangerous, deadly, and “imbued with intelligence, guile, charm, and unambiguous sexual electricity” (Christopher, 1997: 197), the femme fatale is a reflection of male fears. It is said that “her actions almost always prove fatal” (Wager, 1999: 15) to others and herself.

Interestingly, the notion of ‘femme fatale’ is not new in the Chinese culture. This can be reflected in the Chinese language, which contains common idioms and figurative expressions referring to the archetype of demonic, destructive beauties. For example, in the expression “紅顏禍水” (Literal translation: Rouge, face, disasters and floods),

beautiful women are compared to disasters and floods. This implies that beautiful women can bring danger and harm. The term “蛇蠍美人” (Literal translation: Snakes, scorpions, beauties), on the other hand, compares beautiful women with poisonous animals such as snakes and scorpions. A similar implication can be found in the Chinese saying “最毒婦人心”, which states that women’s hearts are the most toxic. While beauties are said to be evil, threatening and destructive, the expression “紅顏薄命” (Literal translation: Rouge, face, thin in fate) may bring some relief, for it is prophesized that beautiful, inauspicious women almost always die young. Looking at the Chinese quasi-mythology and history, the depictions of dangerous, beautiful women are as rich as those reflected in the figurative Chinese expressions. As Cass (1999) observes, in Chinese folklore, the femme fatale is almost always paired with “the innocent male, her natural victim” (87). While men represent social order, rationality and the spirit, it is assumed and commonly believed that the female “is the eroticized sex, the sex more needy of gratification, the sex more likely to create crisis, the sex least likely to succeed” (ibid). For instance, Danji (妲己), the concubine and then wife of King Zhou of the Shang dynasty (1070 – 1027 B.C.), Bao Si (褒姒), the wife of King You of the Zhou dynasty (781 – 771 B.C.), Lu Zhi (呂雉), Empress of Emperor Gaozu of the Western Han dynasty (206 – 8 B.C.), Zhao Feiyan (趙飛燕), Empress of Emperor Cheng of the Western Han dynasty (206 – 8 B.C.), and Diao Chan (刁嬋), the wife of general Lu Bu of the Eastern Han dynasty (25 – 220 A.D.)

are all typical femmes fatales who brought misfortune, disorder and destruction to the King and his empire.

From the infamous stories of Danji, Bao Si, Empress Lu, the Zhao sisters and Diao Chan, we can conclude that a typical Chinese femme fatale is likely to fit into some or all of the following descriptions: firstly, she must be exceptionally beautiful and attractive to entrap men, delude their minds and corrupt their souls. Secondly, the woman has a serious lack of morals, virtue and self-discipline. She will utilize her privilege and indulge herself in excessive pleasure, extravagance and luxury at the expense of others' sufferings and the kingdom's future. Next, when granted power and position, she will reveal her bizarre behaviour, inhuman proclivities and debauched appetites. Finally, the Chinese femme fatale is also notorious for her hypocrisy, cunningness and scheming character.

Compared to the archetypal femmes fatales in the West, the Chinese ones are similar in many aspects. The only difference may be that while a femme fatale in a film noir usually arouses males' interest, curiosity and fear, a Chinese femme fatale is more likely to overwhelm the readers with feelings of disgust, repulsion and abjection. Intriguingly, most Chinese femmes fatales are associated with insanity, perversity and / or some kind of dementia. To put it in another way, "charm, and unambiguous sexual electricity" (Christopher, 1997: 197) they certainly possess, but it is almost always their sadistic nature, perverse behavior, debauched tastes and extreme cruelty that are in focus and



described in great detail in the Chinese texts. To a certain extent, a Chinese femme fatale is a combination of a femme fatale and a monstrous feminine.

In the following section, I will examine the descriptions of Mrs Coulter in both Pullman's text and the Chinese translated text. Manipulations in the target text as well as the possible reasons for the alterations will be discussed.

#### **4.5.1. The Representation of Mrs Coulter in the Translated Text**

As a mother, Mrs Coulter may have shown great compassion for her daughter Lyra. Yet, considering all the evil deeds she does, she belongs more to the menacing femme fatale type. In chapter thirty of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000), Metatron, the prince of the angels scrutinizes Mrs Coulter meticulously. The following is the judgment he makes,

Corruption and envy and lust for power. Cruelty and coldness. A vicious probing curiosity. Pure, poisonous, toxic malice. You have never from your earliest years shown a shred of compassion or sympathy or kindness without calculating how it would return to your advantage. You have tortured and killed without regret or hesitation; you have betrayed and intrigued and glorified in your treachery. You are a cess-pit of moral filth (419).

The passage is faithfully translated into Chinese without much unnecessary alteration. Only two verbs, "tortured" and "killed" are explicited as "拷打" and "殺人" (Translated by Wang, 2002: 461), which literally mean "interrogate and beat" and "kill people" in English. However, such loyalty towards the source text is not persistent when

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it comes to other descriptions of Mrs Coulter, especially when they involve some relatively sensitive content about the femme fatale.

For instance, intentional omissions can be found when there is sexual implication between the femme fatale and another male character. In chapter fifteen of *The Subtle Knife* (1997), there is a scene when Mrs Coulter uses her beauty to seduce Sir Carlo Charles to tell her why he pursues Will, what weapon Will has got and what is special about Will's subtle knife. Although there is no physical contact between Mrs Coulter and the old man, there is close bodily liaison between the daemons of the two characters. Since the old man's daemon is a serpent, the seduction scene becomes immensely sexual when Mrs. Coulter's daemon, the golden monkey caresses the phallus-like serpent,

Her [Mrs Coulter's] daemon's little black horny hands were stroking the serpent-daemon. Little by little the serpent loosened herself and began to flow along the man's arm towards the monkey...

“Ah,” said the man, as the daemon slipped slowly off his arm and let her weight into the golden monkey's hands. The monkey raised her slowly to his face and ran his cheek softly along her emerald skin. Her tongue flicked blackly this way and that, and the man sighed.

...he was finding it hard to resist; his daemon was twined gently around the monkey's breast, and running her head through and through the long lustrous fur as his hands moved along her fluid length.

...And as the golden monkey slowly ran his hands along the emerald serpent again and again, squeezing just a little, lifting, stroking, as Sir Charles sighed with pleasure... (325 - 326).

Pullman uses the adjective “horny” to describe the way Mrs Coulter's daemon strokes, caresses and squeezes the serpent with his hands. Sensual vocabulary such as “slipped”,

“flicked”, “fluid length” is also used to describe the shape and slippery surface of the serpent. The pleasure and excitement felt by the old man and his serpent are also in focus in the passage. At the end of the scene, Mrs Coulter successfully obtains the information she wants from Sir Charles and the old man is ensnared, intoxicated and killed by the femme fatale.

Fatal ensnarement is not uncommon in the stories of Chinese femmes fatales, but as I have mentioned previously, explicit description of sex and carnal pleasure brought about by evil beauties is usually not emphasized, if not avoided in classical Chinese texts. Traditionally, the femme fatale is meant to be a warning, not an object of sexual fantasy for male readers. Her appearance is supposed to fill the readers with contempt, fear, disgust and repulsion rather than curiosity and sexual desire. Thus, while the Chinese translator tries to be as faithful as possible to the original text, she may also have the obligation to desexualize the sensual scene(s) in the Chinese version.

In the translated text of the seduction scene, the adjective “horny” (Pullman, 1997: 325) is replaced by a scientific adjective “角質” (Translated by Wang, 2002: 398). The closest English word for “角質” would be ‘keratoid’. In English, ‘keratoid’ is a medical term that refers to the corneal tissues of the skin. It does not bear the meaning of “desiring sexual gratification” and “sexually excited” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2009), as ‘horny’ does. As a result, the “little, black...hands” (Pullman, 1997: 325) of the golden monkey

are no longer “horny”. They become little, black and rough as leather in the Chinese text. The implied sexual meaning is minimized.

Another subtle and intentional alteration can be found in the same passage. For example, in “Her [the serpent’s] tongue flicked blackly this way or that” (ibid), the adverb “blackly” describes the ugly flicking movement of the fork tongue as the serpent enjoys the caress of the golden monkey’s hands. This imagery evokes some erotic connotations about the indecent affair between Mrs Coulter and Sir Charles. However, in the target text, the line is rewritten and ‘cleansed’ to become “蛇的黑舌頭四下吞吐” (Translated by Wang, 2002: 398). Translated back into English, the Chinese line goes like this, “The snake’s black tongue flicked around”. As shown in the back translation, the adverb “blackly” in the source text is substituted by the adjective “black” in the target text. The word associated with the carnal affairs is now simplified as ‘black’, the colour of the tongue, which is free of negative implications.

There is also apparent manipulation in the following paragraph. In “his hands moved along her fluid length” (Pullman, 1997: 326), “his hands” refers to the golden monkey’s hands, whereas “her fluid length” means the sleek or lubricated body of the serpent. Because of the shape and fluid surface of the serpent, unavoidably, the sensual description of the physical liaison between the daemons will be associated with some form of sexual acts. In the Chinese translation, however, the translator manipulates the

text to eliminate the sexual hints. “his hands moved along her fluid length” (ibid) now becomes “男人的手也隨着蛇流動的身軀滑動” (Translated by Wang, 2002: 398). In English, the line can be translated as “Following the moving body of the serpent, the man’s hand slid”. Reading from the back translation, we can see that the golden monkey’s hands are replaced by Sir Charles’ hands, so the golden monkey is not caressing or grasping the serpent anymore. The physical contact between the daemons is omitted and the Chinese text becomes ambiguous because the originally obscene content is censored and changed. The line is oddly incongruent with the previous descriptions. Unwittingly, the Chinese translation does not state clearly where the serpent is, what it is doing, and why it is moving. Similarly, what the man is doing with his hands is not mentioned or explained. The Chinese readers are only told that for some unknown reason, Sir Charles’s hand moved as the serpent moved.

There is also implicit domestication in the translated text of *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). The translator manages to do so by borrowing Chinese vocabulary with rich cultural meaning. Often, the Chinese vocabulary borrowed means much more than what the source text conveys. For instance, in chapter eleven, Pullman writes that like all men, Will too is captivated by the beautiful but evil Mrs Coulter,

He had been captivated by Mrs Coulter. All his thoughts referred to her: when he thought of Lyra, it was to wonder how like her mother she’d be when she grew up; if he thought of the church, it was to wonder how many of the priests and cardinals were under her spell...(2000: 151)

Here, the phrase “under her spell” (2000: 151) is used as a metaphor. The message Pullman wants to convey is that the beauty of Mrs Coulter is like magic. It is as if she has cast a spell on everyone, and no man can resist her charm. To get the author’s meaning across, there can be many different ways because there are more than one expression with similar meanings in Chinese. Nonetheless, the Chinese translator chooses to use “蠱惑”

(Translated by Wang, 2002: 167) in the target text. The Chinese character “蠱” refers to the black magic or voodoo of witches and wizards. It is an ancient word derived from pictures. The word consists of two parts: the lower part of the word is “皿”, which is a basin; the upper part of the word, on the other hand, is made up of three “虫”, which is a symbol of insects. By just looking at the word, one can imagine the gruesome picture -- a full basin of crawling insects, which is used as the ingredient of evil, black magic.

Like the word ‘spell’, the Chinese character ‘蠱’ is also used as a metaphor in the translated text. However, compared to ‘spell’, ‘蠱’ carries much more negative implications. It is associated with poison, demons, witchcraft and desecration. The person (in this case, Mrs Coulter) who uses ‘蠱’ is believed to cause catastrophe, chaos, terror and repulsion. The disgusting imagery of ‘the full basin of insects’ may also remind the Chinese readers of the Chinese femme fatale Bao Si, the consort of King You of Zhou. This is because in *The Books of Songs*, Bao Si and her destructive influence to the kingdom are compared to pest,

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Insects gnaw, insects damage,  
There is no calm, no peace (Cited in Raphals, 1998: 64).

To conclude, the intentional deletion and borrowing in the translation can affect the Chinese readers' perception of Mrs Coulter. Detailed description of the femme fatale's erotic seduction is implicated, if not deleted. Also, the femme fatale who is supposed to be sexy, beautiful and irresistible becomes much less lovable and charming under the manipulation. She is associated with detestable insects, decay, curses, all base and lethal. The Chinese translator seems to have a tendency to de-eroticize and demonize Mrs Coulter, the femme fatale in Pullman's trilogy.

In the last section of this chapter, I will discuss the variations the translator makes in the portrayal of Ma Costa, a heroic female figure that represents the marginalized.

#### **4.6. Variations in the Representation of Ma Costa, the Unruly Gypsy Female**

In *The Northern Lights* (1995), it is revealed that Ma Costa is known by many as the "queen among the gyptians" (56). In many aspects, she represents the marginalized in society – she is gyptian, middle-aged, uneducated, crude, non-feminine. Her English is non-standard, and sometimes she uses foul language. On the other hand, she is the loving mother of two boys. She is also the head of the houseboat. She takes care of Lyra like a baby and tries to protect her from danger when Lyra becomes the target of enemies.

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Reliable, brave, tough and kind-hearted, the gyptian woman is meant to be a heroic figure in Pullman's series.

In the Chinese version, Ma Costa is still heroic, but the translator has deliberately standardized her gyptian language and omitted the foul language. Instead of being the crude and irreverent gyptian woman of the streets, the Ma Costa in the target text looks more like a conventional, refined woman. One reason for the alterations is that the translator may think that there is a need to make the translated text more suitable for child readers. Foul language and ungrammatical expressions are therefore manipulated and rewritten. Another possible reason for the alterations is that the translator wants to keep the character of Ma Costa 'clean' and respectful in the Chinese version. She may think that if the non-standard language features are preserved, the positive and heroic features in the character of Ma Costa will be denigrated. Worse still, Chinese readers might even regard Ma Costa as a character as unlikable as the Chinese granny, who is usually ugly, gossipy, vulgar and comical. The Falstaff-like stereotype of the grannies is so powerful that the translator plays safe here and sacrifices the faithfulness to the source text. Before I look into the standardization of Ma Costa's language in the translated text, I will briefly introduce the archetype of the infamous Chinese grannies.

As Cass (1999) notices, Chinese elder women (I will use the word 'grannies' hereafter, unless noted) often play the role of the poor but resourceful troublemaker in the private sphere. In traditional Chinese literature and folklore, a granny is almost always a mischief



maker and an immoral trickster. In a number of ways, Ma Costa is similar to the grannies – as a gyptian, she is not confined to the realm of the domestic. Free from the constraints of social custom, she can travel around in her boathouse, anytime and anywhere she wants. Also, considering her language, Ma Costa is not a lady from the upper class or the middle class. She seems uneducated and crude but at the same time, she is resourceful, powerful and knowledgeable. To a large extent, the anti-conventionality of Ma Costa resembles that of Chinese grannies. Having said so, it would be unfair and inappropriate to see Ma Costa as a Chinese granny-like figure, for the gyptian woman has never done anything indecent and immoral except for speaking foul language.

To prevent readers from mixing up Ma Costa with the stereotypical Chinese grannies, the translator omits swear words and non-standard language in the gyptian woman's utterances. Without the gyptian linguistic traits, Ma Costa becomes more like an educated, well-mannered adult and less like a gyptian woman of low social status. In the following, I will look into the gyptian language of Ma Costa and Lyra (who picks up the gyptian accent from Ma Costa) in the source text as well as the standardized language in the Chinese text. I will also discuss how foul language is censored in the Chinese translation.

#### 4.6.1. Gyptian Linguistic Features Diminished in the Target Text

In the Chinese version of Pullman's *His Dark Materials*, it is made known to the reader that Ma Costa is a gypsy woman. However, no gyptian features can be found in Ma Costa's language in the target text. To a certain extent, this is acceptable because technically, it is impossible to transfer the grammar, style and semantic content of Pullman's text entirely to the target language. In this case, faithful translation is just an imagined condition. The translator does not pursue faithfulness and equivalence in the translating activity. She simply neglects the apparent linguistic features that Pullman manages to put in the gyptian language. The informal, non-standard English that Ma Costa uses is unfaithfully translated into standardized, fluent Chinese which educated Chinese people from the middle class speak.

For instance, in *Northern Lights* (1995), Ma Costa says to Lyra, "I dunno what you're a-doing here, but you look wore out. You can have Billy's crib, soon's I've got a hot drink in you. Set you down there." (106) The gyptian woman's English is casual, grammatically incorrect and strangely accented – 'don't know' is informally pronounced as "dunno"; the expression of "a-" is added in front of the verb "doing"; 'worn out' is wrongly said as 'wore out', etc. Though Ma Costa's speech is clear enough for English speakers to understand, the line reveals that she comes from a different background and she may not have received education at school.

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In the Chinese text, however, Ma Costa's poor grammar and strangely accented English are smoothened out. The hint of exotic background disappears, “我不知道妳到這裡來做什麼，可是你看起來累壞了。妳可以睡在比利的小床上，我先替妳準備一些熱飲，孩子，在那裡好好休息吧。” (Translated by Wang, 2000: 149) Translated back into English, the line becomes, “I don't know what you are doing here, but you look worn out. You can sleep on Billy's little bed. Let me prepare some hot drink for you, child, take a good rest there.” All the grammatical mistakes, special pronunciations and expressions are deleted from the original version. In addition, the sentences become more polite and polished in the target text. The effect that Pullman means to create in the language of the gypsy woman disappears. While “soon's I've got a hot drink in you” in the source text captures accurately the essence of the working class discourse, “Let me prepare some hot drink for you” in the target text suggests courtesy and good manners, which creates a very different effect from that of the original version.

The gyptian influence on Lyra is also deleted. In chapter seven of *Northern Lights* (1995), we find that having sailed with the Roma people for a period of time, Lyra is influenced by the group and has acquired a gyptian voice “complete with Fen-Dutch words” (1995: 113). To indicate that Lyra has picked up the gyptian tongue from Ma Costa and her Roma mates, Pullman adds some grammatical mistakes and non-standard pronunciation in Lyra's English. For example, “I **en't** never deceived anyone!” (ibid, my emphasis) and “And they **was** all working on some plan, I **dunno** what it was, only they **was** going to

make me help her get kids for 'em." (1995: 119). Under the influence of Ma Costa, Lyra learns gypcian English fast and she embraces the language and culture in spite of the negative associations that the non-standard English might lead to.

In the target text, however, the gypcian linguistic features manifested in Lyra's language are eliminated. "I **en't** never deceived anyone!" is translated as "我從沒騙過任何人" (Translated by Wang, 2002: 158). In English, the line means, "I have never deceived anyone." The Chinese translator could have used any colloquial expression to retain the informality in the source text, but still she chooses to replace the utterance with proper Chinese. The exclamation at the end of the line is also omitted. For the non-standard pronunciation of 'them', i.e. '**em**', a similar kind of omission takes place. The subject-verb disagreement between "they" and "was" is also neglected. As a consequence, no gypcian or exotic characteristics can be found in Lyra's language. Ma Costa's influence on Lyra is deleted entirely.

#### **4.6.2. Strong Language Censored**

Besides the incorrect grammar and foreign accent, strong words in Ma Costa's language are also omitted from the Chinese version. In chapter three of *Northern Lights*, Ma Costa is worried that the Gobblers' might have kidnapped her son Billy. As Pullman puts it, "in a terror for a missing child" (1995: 56), the gypsian mother "stumble[s] through the

crowd on the wharf, bellowing for her child” (ibid). She loses all patience and yells out strong, indecent words to others, “Well, what have you done with him, you **half-arsed pillock**<sup>2</sup>?” (54, my emphasis) Shortly after that, when Ma Costa finds that the information provided by the horse-trader is not helpful, she uses strong language again, “He was holding your **bloody** horses for you!” (55, my emphasis)

In the target text, the strong words in Ma Costa’s language are censored. They are replaced by milder and less offensive expressions. Instead of giving the direct translation for ‘half-arsed pillock’, the Chinese translator deletes the figurative adjective ‘half-arsed’ and translated ‘pillock’ as ‘混球’ (Translated by Wang, 2000: 84), meaning ‘dumb-head’ or ‘muppet’, which carries a similar meaning with ‘pillock’, only less brutal. On the other hand, ‘bloody’ is replaced by ‘該死的’ (ibid). Literally, ‘該死的’ is a death curse. However, the expression is so commonly used in scolding and blaming that the utterance hardly bears its literal meaning. Comparing with the term ‘bloody’, ‘該死的’ is not as rude.

#### 4.7. Summary

To conclude, in this chapter, I have introduced various significant and influential gender ideologies in Chinese culture, including the philosophy of yin and yang, the Confucian

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<sup>2</sup> According to the dictionary, ‘pillock’ refers to a stupid, annoying person. It was offensive for it used to be referred to the male sexual organ.

teaching of gender, the Buddhist notion of genderless-ness, and the stereotypical portrayals of femmes fatales and earthy grannies in Chinese literature. From my observation, these overarching gender stereotypes and feminine archetypes in the traditional Chinese culture have a deep impact on the translated work. Intentionally or subconsciously, the translator has made ideological alterations in the representations of Lyra, Lyra's daemon, Mrs Coulter and Ma Costa. A fusion effect is created as translation strategies such as addition, omission, borrowing, explicitation, implicitation, domestication and standardization are used in the Chinese translation. Firstly of all, for the portrayal of Lyra, the translator tends to introduce Yang features, i.e. masculine traits into the subversive character of Lyra, but she is not sensitive enough to detect the anti-patriarchal notions which Pullman intends to express via the female protagonist. Secondly, for the representation of Pantalaimon (Pan), the 'genderlessness' and formlessness of Guan Yin are borrowed to enhance the Buddhist views of gender. Translation strategies like the creative translation of pronouns, the ellipsis of pronouns, etc. create a fusion effect in the target text. The portrayal of Mrs Coulter, on the other hand, is under the shadow of the archetypal Chinese femme fatale. The evil aspects of Mrs Coulter are amplified. Meanwhile, sensual adjectives used to describe the sexual scenes between the femme fatale and her prey are often replaced by neutral expressions. Mrs Coulter is de-eroticized and further demonized in the target text. Lastly, in the representation of Ma Costa, the Chinese translator eliminates foul wordings, ungrammatical expressions and exotic pronunciations in the gyptian language. The manipulations in translation distort the image of Ma Costa – the gyptian woman becomes

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less rude, more educated, and less comparable to the stereotypical grannies in Chinese culture.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **Conclusion**

With some self-discipline and self-observation we can all find out for ourselves that what we call seeing is invariably coloured and shaped by our knowledge (or belief) of what we see.

Ernst. H. Gombrich (1960: 394)

#### **5.1. Introduction**

As mentioned in the introduction, the issue of gender stereotypes has been a recurring problem for decades. Throughout much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the social learning, modeling and self-socialization of gender have been studied extensively. Time and again, research from diverse disciplines has suggested and proven that gender, or the notion of what it means to be male or female, is a social construct that exists “only because people tacitly agree to act as if they exist” (Pinker, 2002: 202). We are well aware that under the influence of gender stereotypes, our behaviour is moulded in predictable ways:

First, they act as standards that guide people’s actions (e.g. when a woman acts in “feminine” way on a first date). Second, they cause people to encourage gender-stereotypical behaviour in others (e.g. when a manager reins in an aggressive female employee more than he reigns in an equally aggressive male employee). Finally, negative stereotypes about the relative abilities of women and men sometimes serve to undermine individuals’ performance (e.g. When a girl



experiences doubts about her math ability because of the stereotype that girls aren't really good at math) (Lippa, 2005: 157).

We are also warned of the detrimental effect of gender stereotypes – once they come into existence, they have the power to “distort our perceptions and memories, leading us to see what we expect to see and to remember only information that confirms our stereotypes” (Lippa, 2005: 111).

To raise awareness in the community and avoid the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and inequity, in 1999, UNESCO provided and published guidelines on gender neutral language. Similarly, from 2001 to 2005, the Ministry for Equal Opportunities in Luxembourg cooperated with various institutes in Europe, namely the Council of Education and Training in Belgium; the Department of Education and Science in Dublin, Ireland; the Federal Ministry for Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women and Youth in Germany; the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia; the European Network on Teacher Education Policies in Luxembourg; the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family, as well as the Department of Equal Opportunities and Antidiscrimination in the Slovak Republic. Together, the institutes from six European countries launched a project called “Gender roles and stereotypes in education and training”.

In this study, the ways gender aspects can be integrated into curricula and practical training at preschools, primary and secondary schools are investigated, discussed and promoted. Furthermore, UNICEF has also promoted the aspiration of overcoming gender

stereotypes in China. With the objective of promoting girls' rights in school and creating a healthy, gender-sensitive learning environment, UNICEF launched its education programme in China. In 2007, about 1000 schools across ten provinces in China became UNICEF-assisted child-friendly schools, in which all children, girls and boys, are allowed equal opportunities to learn and enjoy 'masculine' games such as football and basketball during playtime (Ingram, 2007).

In spite of all the efforts that have been made to promote gender equality throughout the world, gender bias is still a very big issue. Ganahl, Prinsen and Netzley (2003) note that from the 1980s to the late 1990s, gender stereotypes did not change significantly in TV ads. More disappointingly, gender bias is still prevalent in the content, language and illustrations of many children's books (Kittelberger, 2002). According to Eagly's social role theory (2000), the following biased gender views are still confirmed repetitively in our culture every day:

1. Women are more often homemakers and men breadwinners.
2. Women tend to work in different occupations than men do.
3. Women often have lower status than men do (Lippa, 2005: 183).

We could ask the question: why is it so hard to eliminate gender stereotypes and sexism, even though many scholars have tried hard to discuss and point them out, notably in the area of education? As I have observed in the field of children's literature in this thesis, one possible reason could be that we may have overlooked some subtle but significant areas through which children develop stereotypical attitudes towards gender. To put it in

another way, while parents, teachers and librarians are trying to bring in children's books that explore diversity in gender identities and choose texts that rewrite traditional gender roles, most of them seem to have neglected areas in which stereotypical messages are hidden. These neglected areas, namely illustrations in children's books, children's books' abridged versions, edited versions, adaptations and translations published worldwide (with or without the permission of the authors), are all products that have undergone a series of alterations. Under the manipulations of the translator, the illustrator, the editor, and / or the publisher, these versions and re-versions are bound to be different from the author's original work. The portrayal of gender in the original work and that in the translated versions, for instance, can be very different. For instance, Mulan, the female warrior in the original Chinese version is very different from the Mulan portrayed in the Disney version (See Module 2 for details). Unfortunately, book critics do not seem to pay much attention to manipulated versions. It seems that not many critics and social commentators are interested in the work of some unknown translators, editors and / or illustrators. Worse still, the general public tends to underestimate the influence these alterations and manipulations in the texts have on the reader, especially on a child reader. Often, it is assumed that manipulated versions, in particular translated texts, would carry messages similar or equivalent to that of the original version. As a consequence, these manipulated texts become loopholes which allow the perpetuation of gender stereotypes and biases in the genre of children's literature.

My research in this thesis (Module 3) is an attempt to raise gender awareness in English children's literature and its Chinese translation, a field that has long "flown under the

radar of comparative literature” (O’Sullivan, 2005: 1), The main questions to address my topic were:

1. How did Pullman represent the major female characters in his trilogy?
2. How was Pullman’s work translated in the Chinese (Taiwanese) Version?
3. Was the gender subversion conveyed stronger or weaker in the target text?
4. Did Wang Jing, the Taiwanese translator of Philip Pullman’s series, consciously or unconsciously blend the influences of Chinese gender view(s) into the translated text?

In chapter two, I examined the most common female archetypes that occurred in popular children’s texts, such as the fairytale. After providing a general picture of the field of studies, in chapters three and four of Module Three, I concentrated on the portrayals of female characters in two specific texts – Philip Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* and its Chinese translation. In chapter three, I discussed what was underneath the gender representations of Lyra, Pan (Lyra’s daemons), Mrs. Coulter and Ma Costa in the source text. In chapter four, I turned the focus to the shifts / manipulations / mistranslations in the representations of Lyra, Pan, Mrs. Coulter and Ma Costa in the target text. For each gender construction (whether it was by the author or the Chinese translator), the gender ideology at work, assumptions and subversive underlying notions were discussed with reference to stereotypical female images in the pretexts.

In this concluding chapter, I will reflect on the observations I made in Modules One to Three. Major findings will be summarized and key arguments that I put forward in the

previous chapters will be briefly revisited. I will also point out the limitations of the study and suggest areas for further research.

## **5.2. Reflections on the Research**

Re-reading and reconsidering the observation I made in previous chapters, in particular chapters three and four of Module Three, i.e. the two core chapters of this thesis, I became more and more convinced, through my findings, that gender is, as Butler (1999) describes, a form of “performativity”. As my research and various others have demonstrated, under different contexts and at different times, the interpretations and expressions of gender shift and vary. In the field of translation studies, the constant shift in meaning indicates that there is cultural untranslatability (See Module One, section 1.4 for details). For followers of Jacques Derrida however, the constant deferment of meaning is a typical example of *différance* (1973), i.e. the notion that there are no such things as absolute identities and trans-historical truth, and that truth only exists continually and relationally within a certain time and space. In sections 5.3, 5.4, 5.5 and 5.6, I will summarize and point out the shifts, or, layers of *différance* that exist across the pretexts, Pullman’s *His Dark Materials* (1995 – 2000), the Chinese translation and my interpretation.

### 5.3. *Différance* in the Pretexts

The first *différance* is discussed in chapter three, section 3.3.1, in which I examined gender relations reflected in the Myth of the Fall in *Genesis*. What I first noticed about the narrative is the traditional, patriarchal voice which violently dominates the Biblical text, setting up a series of hierarchical oppositions. Whether the reader is aware of the sexist issue which many feminists and scholars have pointed out, the ‘differing’ of *différance* is at work: ‘Man’ and ‘woman’ are distinguished from one another. ‘Man’ is considered primary, while ‘woman’ is relegated to a mere derivative, supplementary, and inferior position. In the Bible, Eve, the mother of all humans, has no autonomous existence of her own. She comes to the world only because Adam tells God that he is lonely and he needs a partner. Compared to Adam, she is also the weaker sex that is deceived and tempted by the serpent. To put it in another way, the binary differentiation in the Biblical text reduces and pigeon-holes ‘woman’ as a category that is different from the category of ‘man’. In differing and classifying, what is originally fluid, free-floating and flexible in ‘woman’ is oppressed, controlled and reduced to something essential and definable in *Genesis*.

*Différance* also occurs between the Biblical pretext and the Gnostic version. Although in both versions, Eve disobeys God, apparently, what is signified in the disobedience is entirely different in the two texts. First and foremost, the Gnostic version worships the serpent as the bestower of knowledge. Secondly, Eve’s disobedience against God is interpreted, represented and celebrated as a necessary move for humans to gain wisdom.

Through differing, the Gnostic text opens up new possibilities for the representation of Eve. The gender stereotypes together with the binary oppositions are overthrown and broken. Gender, as an ideological configuration, keeps changing.

#### **5.4. *Différance* in *His Dark Materials***

The shift in the representation of gender continues in Pullman's work. Inspired by feminist thinking and probably the Gnostic text, Pullman based his protagonists, Lyra and Will, on the characters of Eve and Adam in the Eden story. He deliberately subverts the stereotypical gender roles of Eve and Adam in his re-version. Convincingly, Pullman shows the reader that his version differs much from the pretext. For instance, in the Biblical pretext, God Yahweh creates the whole world for Adam, the man. Eve, the woman is created only because Adam wants a "suitable helper". This is, however, in Pullman's version, reversed. First of all, the reader is reminded many times that Lyra, the new Eve, will take the leading role of bringing big changes and new order to the world. Long before Will appears in the plot, Lyra and her daemon have already caught the reader's attention starting from the first page of the first book. Throughout the entire series, Lyra's adventure is always the centre of attention. By contrast, Pullman hardly talks about 'Adam' or 'the new Adam' in the series. Even if Will is 'the new Adam', the male protagonist only joins the story as Lyra's assistant – he is there to protect Lyra so that she can continue with her mission. Occasionally, Will also plays the subversive role of a caring, domestic helper – the teenage boy is the one who teaches Lyra how to cook and do housework.

Besides inverting the notion of gender roles suggested by the Holy Bible, what is also remarkable in the trilogy is that Pullman breaks gender stereotypes we have long taken for granted. Negative connotations associated with female archetypes such as Eve, the femme fatale and the gypsy female are inverted and / or rewritten. For example, in *His Dark materials*, the new Eve does not seduce Adam (if Will is Adam) into sin. As a matter of fact, at the end of the last book, Lyra is the one who manages to restrain her passion and selfishness when Will tempts her to leave the window between their worlds open, so that they do not need to separate forever (See section 3.4.3 for details). Apart from self-discipline, the new Eve also manifests strong will power and Christ-like virtues. She can go as far as giving up her own daemon (her soul and personal happiness) so as to bring hope to the land of the dead. She is also courageous in doing things that others dare not try – sharing true stories of life and making friends with the harpies, the ugly and dangerous female monsters. Lyra's mother, Mrs Coulter, on the other hand, is not only a femme fatale. For the love of her daughter, she too can be a heroine who is selfless and fearless when facing great danger. Likewise, Ma Costa does not behave in the way stereotypical gypsy women usually do – instead of being sexualized as a debauched lover, romanticized as a wandering vagabond, or portrayed negatively as an irresponsible mother and child stealer, Pullman's gyptian queen is respectable, hard-working, down-to-earth and loving.

Apart from the subversion of traditional and stereotypical gender roles, through the invention of daemons, Pullman also brings out the subtle notion that we all bear some bisexual qualities. Just as Lyra has Pan and Will has Kirjava, it is natural to possess both



feminine and masculine qualities in us. There is no need to twist our nature and force ourselves into following the so-called standard gender conventions. By and large, there is *différance* between the notion of gender in the pretexts and that of Pullman's trilogy.

### **5.5. *Différance* in the Chinese Translation**

After the discussion of Pullman's trilogy, I moved on and examined the representations of female characters in the Chinese translation of Pullman's *His Dark Materials*. Having taken the linguistic and cultural un-translatability into consideration, I found that once again, as I expected, there are yet some more shifts in the representations of gender in the Chinese translated text. Wang's translation is a good demonstration of how a translator can be constrained by his / her "own ideology" (Alvarez and Vidal, 1996: 6), as well as "by what the dominant institutions and ideology expect of [him / her]" (ibid). While the rewriting in Pullman's series bravely breaks gender stereotypes and encourages free expression of gender, the rewriting in its Chinese translation is inconsistent – sometimes, the translator makes use of translation strategies such as explicitation and addition to advocate Pullman's subversive gender view. At other times, however, anti-patriarchal messages in the source text are overlooked. The translator simply omits Pullman's descriptions or substitutes them with Chinese expressions that are hardly equivalent to the original. In both cases, *différance* takes place.

In Chapter Four, I first discussed the representation of Lyra in the Chinese translation. Wang, the Chinese translator often imports *yang* qualities to exaggerate the masculine

traits in Pullman's Lyra. For instance, in chapter 17 of the first book, 'jie-su' (解數), a Chinese expression that refers to fighting methods and strategic moves in kung-fu, is used to describe the way Lyra helps the children to escape from the Gobblers' experimental station in Bolvangar. Similarly, in chapter 9 of the second book, the Chinese idiom 'dan-da-ba-tian' (膽大包天), i.e. daring and outrageous enough to cover up the sky, is used to describe Lyra. As a result, compared to Pullman's Lyra, the Lyra in the Chinese text becomes even more daring, outrageous, assertive and masculine. On the other hand, the Chinese translator seems to have overlooked the underlying anti-patriarchal tone in Pullman's work. In chapter 5 of *Northern Lights* (1995), Pullman writes that Lyra feels uncomfortable with the artificiality and hypocrisy of the so-called ladies from the high society. Yet, in the translated version, Wang softens the repulsion by omitting the subtle negative tone in the source text.

Then, I discussed the representation of Pan, i.e. Lyra's daemon. The Chinese translator implicitly mixes the notion of formlessness and genderlessness of Guan Yin, the Buddha of Compassion, with the form-changing feature of children's daemons. One obvious example is that different Chinese pronouns are used to refer to Pan, even though in the source text, Pullman made it clear to the reader that Pan is a male and his gender identity cannot be changed.

I also discussed the representation of Mrs Coulter in the Chinese version. It was found that images of the femme fatale archetype in Chinese culture may have affected the way

Wang looks at the character of Mrs Coulter. Regarding scenes and descriptions of Mrs Coulter, often, adjectives such as “horny” (Pullman, 1997: 325) and expressions that suggest sexual desire and carnal pleasure are intentionally deleted and replaced. Meanwhile, through the creative use of figurative Chinese terms such as the Chinese character ‘gu’ (蠱), a word that refers to evil, black magic, Mrs Coulter is coloured with the notion of disgust, chaos, terror and destruction, i.e. imagery that is typical with the Chinese femmes fatales.

Finally, I looked into the representation of Ma Costa, the gyptian female in the Chinese translation. The most apparent alteration that I could observe is the standardization of Ma Costa’s gyptian language. With the manipulation of the translator, Ma Costa is represented as more educated and less rude. For instance, all the grammatical mistakes, foreign accent and non-standard expressions disappear in the Chinese version. Also, foul language of the gyptian woman is replaced by mild, neutral wordings. For the standardization, I suggested that it may be due to two main reasons. Firstly, it is likely that the translator feels that she has the obligation to provide Chinese child readers with proper Chinese, even though this is done at the expense of loyalty towards the source text. The other possible reason for the standardization is that the translator is aware that Pullman’s Ma Costa is surprisingly similar to the indecent granny figure that occurs in traditional Chinese literature and folklore. To prevent Chinese readers from associating Pullman’s Ma Costa with the immoral Chinese grannies in Chinese texts, the translator eliminates the gyptian linguistic traits, making Ma Costa more like an educated, well-mannered adult and less like a woman of low social status.

I also found in a number of cases, alterations in the Chinese translated text are not due to un-translatability. In fact, these alterations may be due to “the explicit social, political or moral belief of the individual writer” (Hollindale, 1998: 12), “the less easily perceived implicit and unquestioned assumptions made by the authors...those values that are taken for granted by the society in which the text was produced and read” (O’Sullivan, 2005: 82). As a reader, the translator reads and sees what s/he believes, and then s/he translates. Unavoidably, the ideology at work always affects the way s/he interprets and translates the text, making the translated text a rewriting of the source text.

I hope to have demonstrated in Chapter Four what I have discussed in Module One – that translation is not done in a vacuum (Lefevere, 1995; Levy, 2000). When a text is interpreted and translated, the original ideology, values and norms in the source text will be shifted, diminished or / and lost, and new ideas are added. Inevitably, gender representations in Wang’s translation are bound to be different from those in the actual source text.

### **5.6. *Différance* in My Interpretation**

The constantly changing representations of women in the pretexts (i.e. *Genesis* in the Holy Bible and the Gnostic version), Pullman’s *His dark materials* trilogy and the Chinese translated text are the central concerns throughout the discussion and analysis of Module Three. In this research journey, I tried to be as objective as I could be. Re-reading the observations and analysis I made about the constantly shifting gender representations,

I realize, however, that as a critic, my situation is no less vulnerable than the Chinese translator's. Like Wang, I am also affected by a certain ideology. I am aware that my interpretation is to a certain extent subjective. It may yet produce another fold of *différance* in the representation of gender.

In an interesting way, Derrida's notion of *différance* gave me comfort. Barthes's proclamation of the 'death of the author' (1977) also gave me confidence to support my claims. As Barthes (1977) suggests, the author cannot claim absolute authority over his or her text because s/he does not exist prior to or outside language. Once the text is written, it exists on its own. How the text is read and interpreted would be entirely up to the readers to decide. Similarly, the same applies to the case of the translator and her translated text. Once the translation is completed, it is free for the readers to approach the translated text from different angles, plot out unique patterns of reading and place emphases on different aspects. In other words, although we do not physically change the words in the text, as readers, we are never passive in the process of reading. It is inevitable that every time we read / re-read a text, we will experience something new and therefore reinvent the text and generate new feelings at the moment of reading.

To sum up, meaning shifts (and so does the notion of gender) every time the author, translator, critic or reader re-visits the text. As long as there is *différance*, meanings will shift, and the chain of interpretations will continue.

### **5.7. The Perpetuation of the Endless Chain of Interpretations**

Gender representations in children's literature and their translation / re-versions are a topic that needs more exploration in future research regarding gender stereotypes. One of the potential areas that researchers may consider developing is the translations of *His Dark Materials* into other languages where researchers could conduct contrastive studies of the portrayals of female characters in different target texts and their gender representations. As far as I am concerned, the approach of comparing target texts has long been a common practice in the field of translation studies. Another area that researchers can try working on is to compare Pullman's fiction with its film adaptation(s). Alternatively, since there is a growing demand for audio-visual translation in the market (Cintas, 2003), one can also look into the English dialogues and narrative in the film adaptations, and then compare them with the new mode of translation – subtitles in Chinese language. Researchers may also examine the portrayals of male protagonists and characters in Pullman's books and other re-versions. I believe all these areas will shed some light on how gender is perceived in our everyday life. My study aimed to initiate a new contrastive area in gender and translation in China.

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